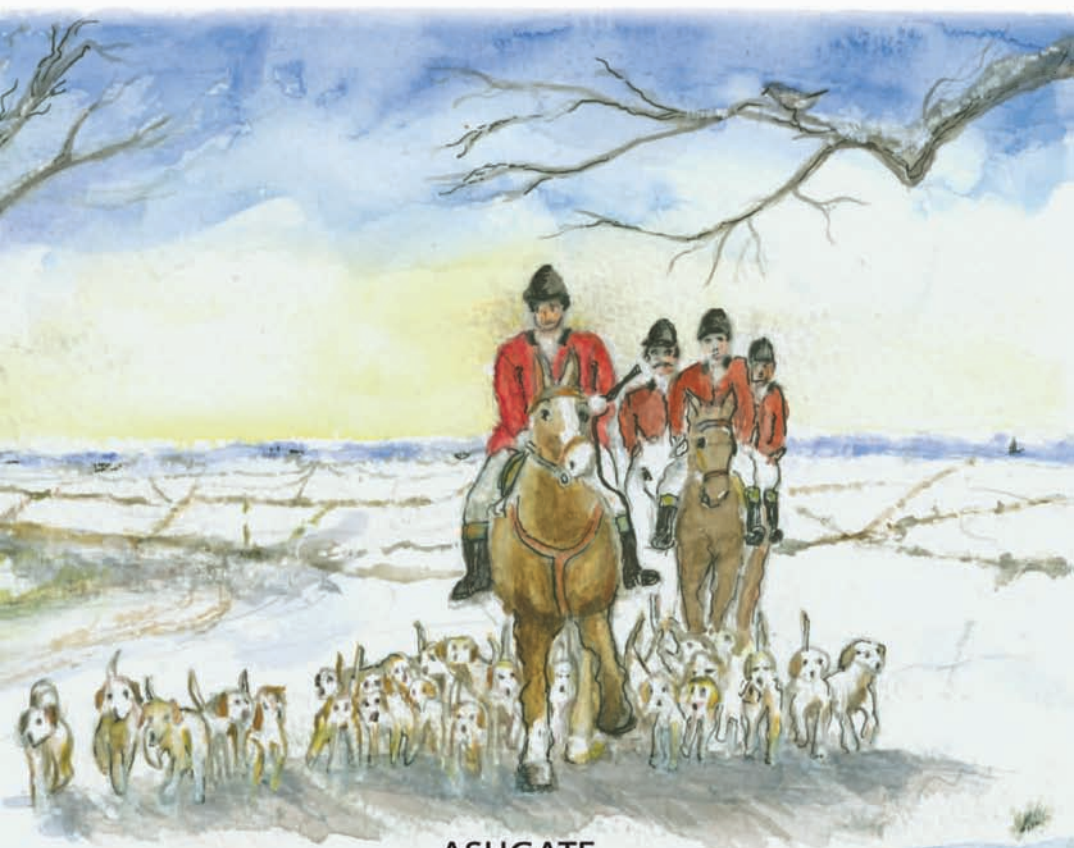


The Fox-Hunting Controversy, 1781–2004

Class and Cruelty

ALLYSON N. MAY



ASHGATE

www.ebook777.com

THE FOX-HUNTING CONTROVERSY, 1781–2004

August 1781 saw the publication of a manual on fox hunting that would become a classic of its genre. Hugely popular in its own day, Peter Beckford's *Thoughts on Hunting* is often cited as marking the birth of modern hunting and continues to be quoted from affectionately today by the hunting fraternity. Less stressed is the fact that its subject was immediately controversial, and that a hostile review which appeared on the heels of the manual's publication raised two criticisms of fox hunting that would be repeated over the next two centuries: fox hunting was a cruel sport and a feudal, anachronistic one at that.

This study explores the attacks made on fox hunting from 1781 to the legal ban achieved in 2004, as well as assessing the reasons for its continued appeal and post-ban survival. Chapters cover debates in the areas of: class and hunting; concerns over cruelty and animal welfare; party politics; the hunt in literature; and nostalgia. By adopting a thematic approach, the author is able to draw out the wider social and cultural implications of the debates, and to explore what they tell us about national identity, social mores and social relations in modern Britain.

To Kieran and Henry and Adeline, with love

The Fox-Hunting Controversy, 1781–2004

Class and Cruelty

ALLYSON N. MAY

The University of Western Ontario, Canada

ASHGATE

© Allyson N. May 2013

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording or otherwise without the prior permission of the publisher.

Allyson N. May has asserted her right under the Copyright, Designs and Patents Act, 1988, to be identified as the author of this work.

Published by
Ashgate Publishing Limited
Wey Court East
Union Road
Farnham
Surrey, GU9 7PT
England

Ashgate Publishing Company
110 Cherry Street
Suite 3-1
Burlington, VT 05401-3818
USA

www.ashgate.com

British Library Cataloguing in Publication Data

May, Allyson N. (Allyson Nancy), 1961–

The fox-hunting controversy, 1781–2004 : class and cruelty.

1. Fox hunting – Great Britain – History. 2. Fox hunting – Great Britain – Public opinion – History. 3. Public opinion – Great Britain – History. 4. Fox hunting – Social aspects – Great Britain. 5. Fox hunting – Moral and ethical aspects – Great Britain.

I. Title

799.2'59775'0941–dc23

The Library of Congress has cataloged the printed edition as follows:

May, Allyson N. (Allyson Nancy), 1961–

The fox-hunting controversy, 1781–2004 : class and cruelty / by Allyson N. May.

p. cm.

Includes bibliographical references and index.

ISBN 978-1-4094-4220-2 (hardcover)—ISBN 978-1-4094-4221-9 (ebook) 1. Fox hunting—Great Britain. 2. Beckford, Peter, 1740–1811. Thoughts on hunting. 3. Animal welfare—Great Britain. 4. Foxes—Great Britain. 5. Social classes—Great Britain.

I. Title.

SK287.G7M39 2013

799.2'59775—dc23

2012028960

ISBN 9781409442202 (hbk)

ISBN 9781409442219 (ebk – PDF)

ISBN 9781409460695 (ebk – ePUB)

V



Printed and bound in Great Britain by the
MPG Books Group, UK.

www.ebook777.com

Contents

<i>Acknowledgements</i>	vii
1 Introduction	1
Fox Hunting: A Brief History	2
Peter Beckford and <i>Thoughts on Hunting</i>	3
Hunting and Class	7
Fox Hunting and Cruelty	9
‘Tyranny and Barbarity’	10
2 The Field	13
Introduction	13
Aristocratic Packs	19
Hunting Squires	21
Subscription Packs	24
Farmers and the Hunt	26
The Clergy	31
The Urban Middle Class	33
Women and Children	36
The Late Twentieth Century	44
Conclusion: ‘Outsiders in the Field’?	46
3 ‘The Cricket of Savages’?: Class and Cruelty	51
Introduction	51
Early Critics: The Clergy and the Fox	53
John Lawrence and the Rights of Animals	57
‘Humanity Dick’: The Animal-Loving Sportsman	59
Legislating against Cruel Sports	60
The RSPCA	62
Changing Standards	64
E.A. Freeman: ‘The Morality of Field Sports’ (1869)	67
Universal Kinship: Henry Salt and the Humanitarian League	69
Between the Wars: Hugh Lofting and Grey Owl	73
The Debate from the Second World War	79
Conclusion: ‘Barbarity in High Places’?	82

4	‘Come Hup! I say, you hugly beast’!: The Hunt in Literature	85
	Introduction	85
	The Nineteenth Century	86
	The Early Twentieth Century: John Masefield (1878–1967)	96
	‘A Deliciously Archaic Spectacle’: Hunting and the Moderns	99
	The ‘Pony Book’	104
	Monica Dickens and the Return to Animal Welfare	112
	K.M. Peyton (1929–)	116
	Conclusion: Gone Away	125
5	Labour and the Fox	127
	Introduction	127
	The Early Days: Keir Hardie	128
	The Post-War Labour Government	132
	The Scott Henderson Report, 1951	136
	Labour in Opposition and Minority Governments	137
	New Labour and the Fox	142
	The Ban: ‘accidental policy outcome’?	148
	Conclusion: Labour, Class and Cruelty	149
6	The Flight from Modernity: Nostalgia and the Hunt	153
	Introduction	153
	Nostalgia for a Pre-war World	157
	‘Englishness’	159
	Surtees, Masefield and Rural England	163
	Nature versus the Pastoral	165
	‘England is no more what it was’	167
	The Horse	175
	‘What does fox-hunting mean to <i>you</i> ?’	177
	Conclusion	184
7	Conclusion	187
	<i>Bibliography</i>	193
	<i>Index</i>	205

Acknowledgements

I am grateful to the librarians and staff of the British Library and the University of Western Ontario's D.B. Weldon Library for their assistance with my research. Special thanks to Elizabeth Mantz, Weldon's history specialist, who tracked down a North American print copy of a rare title and double-checked many of my digital searches for material. Liz goes well beyond the call of duty in ensuring that the needs of Western's history department with respect to both print and electronic sources are met, and I'm glad of the opportunity to publicly acknowledge her professional expertise.

Sincere thanks to Andrea McKenzie and Doug Hay for their careful reading of the penultimate version of my text. I am also grateful to Ashgate's anonymous reviewers of an earlier draft, especially 'Reviewer B', who advised me to reverse the order of two of the chapters as well as to reconsider my original title. I did both. He or she was incorrect, however, to assume that this book, so distant in subject matter from my first, was a result of the 'teaching-research nexus'. In this regard the response of Tom Green, series editor for *The Bar and the Old Bailey* – something along the lines of, 'Honey, do you remember everything you've read since you were eight years old?' – was more perceptive. K.M. Peyton in particular made a very deep imprint.

Indirect debts need also to be acknowledged. I thank Donna Andrew, Victor Bailey, Simon Devereaux, Tom Green, Heather Jackson, John Langbein, David Lemmings, Randy McGowen, Jim Oldham and Keith Wrightson for their quiet encouragement and support over the years, and Chuck Grench for publishing advice. I would also like to thank my students at Western, especially those in the third-year British survey, for their patient if bemused tolerance of lectures on hedges and farming. Frequent visits to my family in Markdale, Ontario and to the Nisson-Huntleys at Marden Hill, Hertfordshire, contributed to the completion of this project: Colin and Tove, thanks especially for my unexpected Christmas stay (Heathrow being unable to locate its snow shovel) in 2010. Thanks as well to Archie and Betty Meares for their generous hospitality, to Archie for the lovely watercolour that graces the cover of this book and to huntsman Mark Bycroft for an informative tour of his kennels, and for allowing me to walk out with his hounds.

Intellectually my largest debt of gratitude is once again to J.M. Beattie, whose eighteenth-century graduate seminar at the University of Toronto was the best thing that ever happened to me. Thank you, John.

Extracts from *Flambards* by K.M. Peyton (OUP, 2004), copyright © K.M. Peyton 1967, reproduced by permission of Oxford University Press. I'm

grateful to Connie Robertson for facilitating this permission. Extracts from *The Guardian* reproduced by permission: © Polly Toynbee/Guardian News & Media Ltd (2004); © George Monbiot/Guardian News & Media Ltd (1995; 2004). Extracts from *The Telegraph* reproduced with permission: © Telegraph Media Group Limited (TMG). My thanks to Helen Wilson (*The Guardian*) and Dawn O'Driscoll (*The Telegraph*) for their assistance. Finally, it has been a great pleasure to work with Ashgate Publishing and I thank in particular commissioning editor Emily Yates for her interest in this book, Beatrice Beaup, Sophie Lumley and Sarah Charters for their various assistance throughout the editorial and production process and reader Katharine Bartlett for her sharp eye and kind words.

Grey County, Ontario

[An] idea, not uncommon among hunting men, is that in former times there was no opposition to hunting. But that is not so. On the contrary, there has never been a time when hunting has been without its troubles and its enemies.

T.H. Dale, *The History of the Belvoir Hunt* (1899), p. 145

This page has been left blank intentionally

Chapter 1

Introduction

For I looked into its pages and I read
The book of fate,
And saw Fox Hunting abolished by an
order of the State.

William Bromley-Davenport, 'Lowesby Hall' (c. 1853)

Fox hunting, which emerged in its modern form at the end of the eighteenth century, was firmly established as England's 'national sport' by the nineteenth.¹ In the twentieth century, however, hunting became increasingly controversial and debate over whether it should be allowed to continue developed into a major party-political issue. This debate peaked following the election of New Labour in 1997. Discussion of a potential ban on the sport occupied 700 hours of parliamentary time between 1997 and 2004, 18 bills to abolish hunting were introduced during that period, the Parliament Act had to be invoked to overturn the Lords' opposition to a ban, fox hunters marched on London in mass protest and the House of Commons was physically invaded, for the first time in more than 300 years, by angry hunt supporters. In Britain, Tony Blair's government will be remembered for two things: the Iraq war and the ban on hunting with dogs. The goal of this book is to set the hunting controversy and the 2004 ban in historical context. Rather, that is, than providing another narrative history of the sport, it instead traces the history of criticisms of fox hunting from the eighteenth century through the twenty-first and explores the way in which the attack on hunting developed over time.

The starting point of this study, 1781, is significant for two reasons. August 1781 saw the publication of a manual on fox hunting that would become a classic of its genre. Immensely popular in its own day, Peter Beckford's *Thoughts on Hunting* is often cited as marking the birth of modern hunting and continues to be quoted from affectionately by the hunting fraternity. Less stressed is the fact that the text was immediately controversial, and that a hostile review – not so much of the book as of its subject – which appeared on the heels of the manual's publication raised criticisms which would be repeated over the next two centuries: fox hunting was a cruel sport and a feudal one at that, the aristocracy and gentry literally riding roughshod over the crops of social inferiors.² This study thus traces

¹ David C. Itzkowitz argues that it earned this reputation between 1800 and 1830. See *Peculiar Privilege: A Social History of Foxhunting, 1753–1885* (Hassocks, Sussex, 1977), pp. 15–16.

² Art. VI. *Thoughts on Hunting*, *Monthly Review* (September 1781): pp. 211–20.

the evolution of accusations levelled from 1781 through to the ban achieved in 2004. Neither the class nor the cruelty concerns ever totally disappeared, but the relative importance accorded to one or the other would vary over time.

Fox Hunting: A Brief History

Celebrated by some as a traditional English pastime and condemned by others as a barbaric feudal relic, fox hunting in fact has a relatively short history – especially in its ‘modern’ form.³ ‘The premise of *modern* fox hunting was a horse that would gallop over distance and jump, together with a rider who could stay on, and hounds with drive that would keep on terms with a fast-running, straight fox’, wrote Raymond Carr, distinguishing the current form of fox hunting from its earlier incarnations. The inedible fox had never been a traditional ‘beast of chase’; it was long considered vermin and dispatched as such. When, however, wild deer began to be scarce, the aristocracy and gentry reconsidered the sporting possibilities offered by this particular mammal. Their interest has been traced to the late sixteenth century, but in its early days fox hunting was a very different business. The hounds in question had usually been bred for hunting the hare; they were good with scent, but slow. The hunt thus met in the early morning, when their quarry, with a full belly from its own nocturnal hunting, would be slower than at other times of day. Carr describes the sixteenth-century fox hunt as a ‘pedestrian occupation’ in which foxes were walked to death, and argues that even in the seventeenth century ‘the pleasure of fox hunting consisted in lying on the ground listening to the subterranean battle between terrier and fox’.⁵ Beckford’s twentieth-century biographer quotes a nineteenth-century source to the effect that the ‘first real steady pack of Fox-Hounds’ was established in 1730 by Thomas Fownes of Stepleton, Dorsetshire, but Fownes’s hounds were still slow.⁶ Until the end of the

³ For histories of fox hunting from the late eighteenth century through the nineteenth see E.W. Bovill, *English Country Life, 1780–1830* (London, 1962), Chapters 13 and 14; Raymond Carr, *English Fox Hunting: A History* (London, 1976) and Itzkowitz. Roger Longrigg’s *The History of Fox Hunting* (London, 1975) and chapters 10, 11 and 13–16 of Emma Griffin’s *Blood Sport: Hunting in Britain since 1066* (New Haven, 2007) set the sport in the broader context of hunting more generally (Longrigg begins with the ancient world and discusses fox hunting in Ireland, Europe and America as well as in England). Carr’s epilogue touches briefly on hunting in the twentieth century (to c. 1974); Jane Ridley’s *Fox Hunting* (London, 1990) takes the narrative into the late 1980s. Richard H. Thomas’s *The Politics of Hunting* (Aldershot, 1983), a superb study of pressure group politics, details the lobbying efforts of both fox hunters and the ‘antis’ into the early 1980s. Griffin’s narrative picks up that thread and carries it to the ban.

⁴ Carr, p. 33.

⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 27.

⁶ A. Henry Higginson, *Peter Beckford Esquire: Sportsman, Traveller, Man of Letters: A Biography* (London, 1937), pp. 96–7, quoting William Chaffin, *Anecdotes and History of*

eighteenth century fox hunting, even when it involved horses, was typically a drawn-out process: 'There are records of *long* runs but not records of *fast* runs'.⁷

In the modern form of hunting burrows or earths were stopped at dawn to ensure that the fox had to stay above ground, and a mounted field now met around eleven in the morning to draw coverts: woodlands or other areas with undergrowth in which the animal could shelter. Hounds were sent in by the huntsman or whippers-in; when the fox broke cover it was pursued until caught and killed, or until hounds lost the scent. If the chase were quick further coverts might be drawn, so that the hunt usually lasted until dusk. Beckford, who acquired his first pack in 1753, aged 13,⁸ was like his contemporaries primarily interested in hound work, and that subject dominates *Thoughts on Hunting*. But hounds were increasingly bred for speed, which would radically alter the character of fox hunting.⁹ In this regard the work of another enthusiast, Hugo Meynell (1735–1808), was particularly important. Meynell, master of the Quorn 1753–1808, 'galloped instead of walking his fox to death' and in doing so attracted new followers to the sport: young men.¹⁰ The 'flying leap' – jumping obstacles at speed rather than from a standstill – was also becoming a feature, spoken of from the 1750s. Changes in the cross saddle, with the high pommel falling out of use, made this less dangerous for the male rider while the enclosure of fields increased the opportunities for daredevilry. Not everyone liked jumping: 'Chute of the Vine used to dismount at a fence, seize his horse by the tail, and make him pull him through or over'.¹¹ Meynell himself was uninterested in either 'leaping' or hard riding, but during his almost 50-year mastership of the Quorn he made hunting fashionable. In the second half of the eighteenth century 'the mild morning's sport of country squires' was being replaced by something altogether more dangerous and exciting.¹²

Peter Beckford and *Thoughts on Hunting*

While the literary stereotype of the fox-hunting booby squire had been established well before Peter Beckford's time, Beckford himself was no country bumpkin.

Cranborne Chase (London, 1818).

⁷ Carr, p. 29. See also Willoughby de Broke's introduction to the 1922 edition of John Cook, *Observations on Fox-Hunting* (London, 1826), pp. viii–ix.

⁸ These were beagles rather than fox hounds, a birthday present from his father.

⁹ For a brief overview of the breeding of hounds specifically for fox hunts see Carr, pp. 35–8.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 38. Griffin argues that the origin of modern, fast-paced hunts pre-dates Meynell and is properly located 'in the decline of deer-hunting after the Restoration' (p. 126) but acknowledges that the practice of breeding fast hounds accelerated and spread in the second half of the eighteenth century.

¹¹ Bovill, p. 200.

¹² Carr, p. 41.

His grandfather had been lieutenant-governor of Jamaica, his uncle, lord mayor of London. The Dorset-born Beckford was educated at Westminster School and Oxford (he left without taking a degree) and spent considerable time touring Europe. There he met Voltaire and Rousseau, as well as fellow Englishman Lawrence Sterne. In 1805 he published his observations of Continental life under the title *Familiar Letters from Italy to a Friend in England*. He also served as MP for Morpeth. It is as a huntsman, however, and in particular a houndsman, that he is remembered.

Thoughts on Hunting, written while Beckford was laid up after an accident, was not the first text to explore the sport of fox hunting: Arthur Stringer's *The Experienced Huntsman* (1714) and the *Essay on Hunting* by 'A Country Squire' (1733) included it in their discussions, as had Nicholas Cox's *The Gentleman's Recreation* (1674). But it is Beckford's book that is remembered. Beckford, wrote the eighth duke of Beaufort (1824–1899),

marks an era not only in the literature but in the history of hunting ... to all who have come after him he has been a 'guide, philosopher, and friend.' It is scarcely too much to say that since his 'Thoughts upon Hunting' were first printed in 1781 there has been no writer who has gone at all seriously into the science and economy of the subject who has not more or less made use of their amusing pages ...¹³

The enduring reputation of *Thoughts on Hunting* could not have been predicted from the initial reception of the work. In the *Monthly Review*, after quoting at length from Beckford's ecstatic description of the chase, a reviewer known only as 'N' comments,

we cannot think of dismissing a subject that never till now came so professedly before us, without introducing a word or two concerning humanity and tenderness to the brute creation ... There is a clear distinction between hunting to rid a country of mischievous animals; and bringing in and cherishing those mischievous animals to the detriment of the pains-taking farmer, merely for the wanton sport and fictitious glory of destroying them afterward in a manner that aggravates the injury done to the defenceless and disregarded husbandman. Hunting on continents may be a necessary business, or a pleasure engrafted on necessary business; in an island so generally cultivated as Great Britain, it is a very expensive system of *tyranny and barbarity* in all its circumstances, from the beginning to the end. Air and exercise, the best pleas for the chace, may be enjoyed in full extent, and feats of agility practised and exhibited, in a variety of rural exercises and sports which do not depend on the wanton abuse and torture of any living being susceptible of pain. We call upon the feelings of any man who does not avowedly disclaim all tender feelings, to attend to the treatment

¹³ Beaufort and Mowbray Morris, *Hunting*, 4th ed. (London, 1888), pp. 20–21.

of animals as represented in the work before us, and then to lay his hand on his heart, and declare how far they agree with those sentiments we dignify by the term humanity.¹⁴

The nascent sport was thus attacked on two grounds. In citing ‘tyranny’ ‘N’ anticipated Ruskin, who in the next century would write, ‘I believe an immense gain in the bodily health and happiness of the upper classes would follow on their steadily endeavouring, however clumsily, to make the physical exertions they now necessarily take in amusements, definitely serviceable. It would be far better, for instance, that a gentleman should mow his own fields, than ride over other people’s’.¹⁵ ‘Barbarity’, however, was N’s major preoccupation.

Who was ‘N’? All of the contributions to the ‘respected, widely read, and financially profitable’ *Monthly Review* were published anonymously, and although identification can in many instances be determined from annotations in the editor’s own copy, the identity of this particular reviewer remains a mystery. ‘N’ was a regular contributor to the literary periodical, writing on history, travel and public affairs, and the critical stance of his review of Beckford is entirely in keeping with the general tone of the paper.¹⁶ Ralph Griffiths, the bookseller who founded the *Monthly Review* in 1749 and served as its editor until his death in 1803, was a Dissenter and a Whig.¹⁷ Although not unwilling to publish views that did not accord with his own, Griffiths tended on the whole to recruit writers from among likeminded friends: ‘as a group his staff opposed the Established Church [and] disapproved of the government which waged war on the American colonists’.¹⁸ In the 1780s and 90s the *Monthly Review* championed parliamentary reform and repeal of the Test Laws and was sympathetic to Fox, albeit sometimes doubting the wisdom of Foxites.¹⁹ Generally speaking, when ‘N’s review of Beckford was published the paper was decidedly anti-Establishment and reform-minded. ‘N’s criticism of Beckford in 1781 may thus be seen as an early instance of what sports historian Emma Griffin has identified as a long-standing association between those opposed to blood sports and a ‘left-leaning, urban intellectualism’.²⁰

Stung by the criticism, Beckford, who had published his *Thoughts* anonymously, immediately set about issuing a second edition which would both bear his name and respond to ‘N’. This edition appeared in 1782. In the preface he wrote,

¹⁴ *Monthly Review* (September 1781): pp. 216–17 (emphasis added).

¹⁵ John Ruskin, *Modern Painters* (5 vols, New York, 1863), vol. 5, p. 346.

¹⁶ Benjamin Christie Nangle, *The Monthly Review, First Series, 1749–1789. Indexes of Contributors and Articles* (Oxford, 1934), pp. 209 and 30. On the periodical see also Derek Roper, *Reviewing before the Edinburgh, 1788–1802* (Newark, 1978).

¹⁷ Griffiths had published *Fanny Hill* and written a ‘catchpenny account’ of the 1745 rebellion, among other things. Roper, p. 20.

¹⁸ Nangle, p. xi.

¹⁹ Roper, pp. 174–5.

²⁰ Griffin, p. 163.

As the author of the following letters hath been charged with inhumanity ... it is now become necessary to publish his name: and tho' it may not be usual to answer an anonymous writer, yet, as it is not impossible that some readers may have adopted his sentiments, this consideration, and this alone, induces the author to answer the objections which the critic hath, so wantonly, made ... All intentional cruelty he entirely disclaims.²¹

Beckford further addressed his critic in a series of footnotes, the first of which appears on page 8, observing,

Since the above was written, Hunting has undergone a severe censure, (vide Monthly Review for September 1781) nor will any thing satisfy the critic less than its total abolition. He recommends feats of agility, to be practised, and exhibited, instead of it. Whether the amendment proposed by the learned gentleman, be desirable, or not; I shall forbear to determine; taking the liberty, however, to remind him, that as hunting hath stood its ground, from the earliest times, and been encouraged and approved by the best authorities, and practised by the greatest men, it cannot now be supposed either to dread criticism, or to need support. – Hunting originates in nature itself, and it is in perfect correspondence to this law of nature, that the several animals are provided with necessary means of attack and defence.²²

Beckford responded less fulsomely to the accusations of 'tyranny' over farmers and husbandmen. In the first edition he had fleetingly acknowledged the enmity of 'farmers for their lambs ... gentleman for their game, and old women for their poultry', but immediately followed that acknowledgment with

an instance of civility I once met with from a farmer. – The hounds had found, and were running hard; the farmer came up in high spirits, and said, 'I hope, Sir, you will kill him; he has done me much damage lately; he carried away all my ducks last week: – I would not *gin* him though – too good a sportsman for that.'²³

In the short term, irritated as Beckford clearly was by the attack made upon him, 'N's hostile review had little effect. Certainly it did nothing to curtail the growth and popularity of the sport of fox hunting, whose 'golden age' is generally located in the nineteenth century. But the twin criticisms of tyranny and barbarity would be revived in the twentieth century.

²¹ *Thoughts on Hunting* (1782), pp. 3–4.

²² *Ibid.*, pp. 8–9. Beckford's biographer devotes several pages to detailing the author's response to his critics; see Higginson, pp. 158–63.

²³ *Thoughts on Hunting* (1781), p. 313; (1782), pp. 338–9.

Hunting and Class

Hunting in its various forms and guises has been a class issue in England since the Middle Ages: laws restricting the privilege of hunting game for sport to royalty, and those members of the landed classes to whom royalty chose to extend favour, and prohibiting the poor from participating deliberately enshrined a double standard which continued for centuries.²⁴ Property qualifications were gradually eased, so that by the late seventeenth century the Crown's ancient prerogative was effectively ceded to the landed gentry. While the Norman forest laws remained on the statute book they were no longer enforced; the 1671 Game Act permitted lords of the manor to appoint their own gamekeepers and the hunting privileges once granted by royal franchise were, from 1692, automatically available to the gentry. Charles II had no objection to sharing his game rights providing his own sport was not adversely affected. The gentry, however, proved less generous than their king and were determined to restrict hunting privileges to their own class. The basic game qualification was thus set at an income of £100 from a freehold estate, a threshold which automatically excluded the labouring poor. There was general consensus on the rationale for such an exclusion: the game laws were 'to prevent persons of inferior rank, from squandering that time, which their station in life requireth to be more profitably employed'.²⁵

The game laws were an obvious site of class resentment and tensions, especially since the quarry was in most cases a potential foodstuff. But it was not merely the labouring poor who were excluded from participation: the property qualification specified *landed* wealth, which meant that the urban bourgeoisie did not fall within the 1671 statute's definition of qualified sportsmen. Seventeenth-century English gentlemen, Peter Munsche suggests, 'were particularly antagonistic towards urban society'. 'Uncomfortably aware' of its increasing power, they saw the rapid expansion of London as a threat to the traditional rural lifestyle and used the Game Act as a means to 'redefine and enhance' their social position.²⁶ Pheasants, hares and venison, as Douglas Hay argues, constituted 'a special currency of class based on the solid standard of landed wealth, untainted by the commerce of the

²⁴ The 2004 parliamentary ban on hunting with dogs is unique among the legal regulation of hunting not only in turning its attention to the hunting of foxes, which had not previously been subject to regulation, but in its blanket ban of the activity. While the legislative regulation of other forms of hunting has a long history, that history had been one of the slow democratisation of blood sports rather than their curtailment.

²⁵ Douglas Hay, 'Poaching and the Game Laws on Cannock Chase', in Douglas Hay et al. (eds), *Albion's Fatal Tree: Crime and Society in Eighteenth-Century England* (New York, 1975), pp. 189–253. See also Douglas Hay, 'Crime, Authority and the Criminal Law: Staffordshire, 1750–1800', PhD thesis, University of Warwick, 1975.

²⁶ P.B. Munsche, *Gentlemen and Poachers: The English Game Laws 1671–1831* (Cambridge, 1981), pp. 17, 19. On the game laws see also Griffin, chapters 9 and 12.

metropolis'.²⁷ Game and the game laws also 'served to define and maintain class distinctions in rural society'. The qualification specified was 'jealously guarded' as 'the only enforceable remnant of the mass of statutes that had once fixed marks of status among Englishmen'.²⁸ Poachers not only stole 'a peculiarly valuable kind of social capital' but 'debas[ed] its coinage' by 'ap[ing] gentlemen in the field' and allowing 'tradesmen and Londoners to play the country gentleman at the dinner-table'.²⁹

It would be difficult, Hay suggests, to exaggerate the importance attached by the qualified to their legal prerogative, and equally difficult to exaggerate the resentment of those barred from participation. That resentment ran through the social scale, creating tensions not only between social classes but within the landed classes. Rural gentry who didn't make the required £100 per annum seethed, while the urban gentry were not only prohibited from joining in this form of hunting but forbidden its fruits: the only game that could be purchased for their table was illegal game. At the lowest end of the social scale the game laws deprived the labouring poor of both food and sporting pleasure. Despite having 'no Somerville or Nimrod to record their sport, only magistrates who wrote the stiff prose of convictions', labourers took pride in their hunting prowess, a pride reflected in the keeping of trophies in the form of heads and antlers despite the prohibitive penalties attached to possession of such objects.³⁰ In the eighteenth-century countryside, Hay suggests, the effect of the Game Act was to 'create friction and sometimes violent hostility between gentry and farmers', but 'something of an alliance between farmers and labourers, who poached together and supported one another with alibis and verdicts of not guilty'.³¹ In the nineteenth century shooting would similarly serve to weaken the bonds between landlord and tenant, as the game birds preserved for sport ate the farmers' crops.

The social politics of fox hunting were from the start quite different from those associated with the game laws. Although a degree of wealth was needed to participate there were never any legal restrictions on who could hunt the fox. And where Beckford's reviewer spoke of the tyranny exercised over the farmer and husbandman, at least some such persons were active participants in the sport. Until the late nineteenth century fox hunting tended rather to unify than divide the rural population – and indeed, the English population as a whole. *The Times* commented with satisfaction as late as 1880 that fox hunting, 'the country sport *par excellence* of English gentlemen is one that tends to unite classes rather than to disserve them. The grand hunting meets of the season at the coverside are in some measure a

²⁷ Hay, 'Poaching', p. 246.

²⁸ Ibid.

²⁹ Ibid., p. 247.

³⁰ Ibid., p. 201. The penalty was a £10 fine or a year in gaol.

³¹ Ibid., p. 212.

foreshadowing of the millennium of which we would willingly dream'.³² Snobbery meant that new wealth happily aped aristocratic custom, leading to the emergence of a fox-hunting bourgeoisie.³³ The aristocracy and landed gentry were by this time not in a position to complain about tradesmen and Londoners polluting their sport, as they could no longer afford to finance it themselves.

In the twentieth century, although the social composition of the hunting field continued to evolve and diversify – and the inclusiveness argument would continue to be pressed by hunt supporters – fox hunting became increasingly divisive. The 'tyranny' argument had resurfaced during the agricultural depression in the last quarter of the nineteenth century, when struggling tenant farmers who could no longer afford to hunt themselves began to protest along 'N's lines about the wealthy – now often wealthy strangers rather than resident gentry – riding over and damaging their fields. And in 1869 a formal attack on the sport was made on moral grounds: it was cruel and immoral, argued historian E.A. Freeman, to pursue and kill any animal, including the fox, merely for entertainment.³⁴

Fox Hunting and Cruelty

Ostensibly, the chief concern in the debates over hunting from 1869 has been the welfare of the fox – an issue of fairly recent origin. The eighteenth-century poacher, convinced of his moral right to game despite the laws forbidding him to hunt it, would have greeted with astonishment the idea that the animals he wished to hunt had rights themselves. In 1781 Beckford's anonymous reviewer was horrified not by the potential agonies endured by the fox in the course of a hunt, but by what he considered unnecessarily harsh discipline of hounds, the setting of hounds on cats as practice and the suffering of quarry such as hare. This restriction of animal welfare concerns would remain typical in the early nineteenth century. A few voices championed the welfare of even wild animals such as the fox, but the primary concern of more prominent activists centred on those domesticated by man. In the early nineteenth century the majority of those who wrote on animal welfare specifically excluded the fox, on the grounds not merely that it was an agricultural pest, but that it was a hunter itself and therefore fair game. Even by the end of that century those willing to express empathy for it were regarded as

³² 'Cub-hunting and fox-hunting', *The Times*, 2 November 1880. The hunt field had earlier been identified as a 'second heaven'; see Harry Hieover, *The Hunting-Field*, 2nd ed. (London, 1859); in the late twentieth century Michael Clayton referred to Leicestershire's grasslands as a paradise: *Foxhunting in Paradise* (London, 1993).

³³ On this subject see F.M.L. Thompson, *Gentrification and the Enterprise Culture: Britain 1780–1980* (Oxford, 2001), pp. 104–10.

³⁴ E.A. Freeman, 'The Morality of Field Sports', *Fortnightly Review*, 6 (October 1869): pp. 353–85.

cranks. The ‘strange, peculiarly English, breed: the animal-loving sportsman’,³⁵ also ensured that the Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals, founded in 1824, did not condemn fox hunting until 1976.³⁶

‘Tyranny and Barbarity’

Distinguishing between class and cruelty arguments in the attack on fox hunting is no easy task: throughout two centuries of debate these issues were often intertwined. As others have pointed out, for example, the gradual legislative protection of animals was shot through with class concerns, the blood sports of the lower classes, such as bull running and the baiting of various animals, condemned and suppressed in the early nineteenth century while fox hunting and shooting were permitted to continue into the twenty-first.³⁷ Early nineteenth-century animal welfare activists were convinced that the lower classes were inherently more cruel in their treatment of animals; from the late nineteenth century, their counterparts were equally convinced that barbarity lurked in high places. This view was reiterated in the late twentieth and early twenty-first century debates on hunting. Some attempt, however, must be made to identify the origins of the twin concerns, and that attempt has been made in Chapters 2 and 3.

Chapter 2 surveys the social composition of the hunt field from Beckford’s time to the present, providing a basis for understanding criticisms of hunting based on class. Although advocates of fox hunting routinely invoke ‘tradition’ in arguing for continuation of the sport, the hunt field has never been stable. In Beckford’s day it consisted primarily of aristocrats or gentlemen, with a few of the wealthier farmers participating as well. In the early nineteenth century fox hunting became both fashionable and slightly less than respectable, the sport of rather badly behaved wealthy young men. By mid-century fox hunting was being colonised by new money and this bourgeois colonisation continued throughout the twentieth century. Middle-class women as well as men became regular participants and children were actively cultivated. Over the centuries the field thus proved porous and allowed relatively democratic entry. Fox hunting, however, also retained its older, aristocratic associations. In the nineteenth century this association was an asset; in the twentieth, it became a decided liability.

³⁵ Carr, p. 199.

³⁶ Playwright Tom Stoppard drew attention to this English phenomenon in *Rock ‘n’ Roll* (London, 2008). The Czech Jan comments that if he had had the good fortune to have been born English, ‘I would be moderately enthusiastic and moderately philistine, and a good sport. I would be kind to foreigners in a moderately superior way, and also to animals except for the ones I kill ...’ Act I. On the RSPCA and fox hunting see Chapter 3 below.

³⁷ See Brian Harrison, ‘Animals and the State in Nineteenth-Century England’, *English Historical Review*, 88 (October 1973): pp. 786–820; Robert W. Malcolmson, *Popular Recreations in English Society, 1700–1850* (Cambridge, 1973).

Chapter 3 explores the evolution of public concerns regarding the cruelty involved in fox hunting, from Beckford's reviewer through the late twentieth century. While isolated examples may be found in earlier times, a heightened sensitivity to the welfare of the animal kingdom is roughly contemporaneous with the emergence of the modern form of fox hunting.³⁸ In the late eighteenth century the fox rarely benefitted from this new concern; by the late nineteenth he too had found public advocates, the pursuit as well as the kill condemned by some. Most of these advocates were dismissed as mildly lunatic in their own time, but in less than a century their views would enter the mainstream of public opinion.

Chapter 4 examines the effects of changing social orthodoxies on the portrayal of fox hunting in English literature. The 'booby squire' image continued to be reproduced but in the nineteenth century more affectionate portraits emerged, from Robert Surtees' tongue-in-cheek tales of a Cockney grocer MFH through George Whyte-Melville's sycophantic fiction and Anthony Trollope's advocacy of the sport. After John Masefield's enormously popular *Reynard the Fox* (1919), however, fox hunting gradually disappeared from adult literature. Identified as an archaic activity, it was increasingly employed as a metaphor for barbarous times and barbarous people. And although it briefly became a staple in twentieth-century children's literature, eventually it vanished there as well, vanquished by the twin criticisms of tyranny and barbarity.

Chapter 5 then turns to the politicisation of the attack on fox hunting in the twentieth century. In particular, it explores the stance of the Labour Party on the issue, from Keir Hardie through Tony Blair and New Labour, assessing the relative weight to be attached to class and cruelty concerns. It also considers the historical reluctance of the party, despite vigorous lobbying from the back benches, to adopt a ban as official policy.

Having surveyed the mounting and increasingly vitriolic public hostility and party-political attacks levelled against the sport of fox hunting, Chapter 6 seeks to analyse and explain its continued, if limited, appeal. This discussion, rather than revisiting the pest control and conservation arguments made from the early nineteenth century, and which continue to be advanced in defence of the sport today,³⁹ explores instead the emotional or psychological appeal of fox hunting. This appeal, rooted in nostalgia for a lost world, is relatively new, a twentieth-century development. Without it the prolonged and intense debate which preceded the 2004 ban would be incomprehensible.

³⁸ See Keith Thomas, *Man and the Natural World: Changing Attitudes in England 1500–1800* (London, 1983).

³⁹ See, e.g., Janet George, *A Rural Uprising: The Battle to Save Hunting with Hounds* (London, 1999); Michael Clayton, *Endangered Species: Foxhunting – the history, the passion and the fight for survival* (London, 2004); Charlie Pye-Smith, *Rural Rites: Hunting and the Politics of Prejudice* (London, 2006).

This page has been left blank intentionally

Chapter 2

The Field

The uninitiated may suppose that a ‘field’ is merely composed of one set of people, drawn from the same class of life; but the foxhunter knows how different is the fact, and how foxhunting reverberates, as it were, through the whole of our social system: how the joy that a good run inspires in the breast of the peer descends through all classes, even to the humble pedestrian who witnesses either the find or the finish. [Fox hunting] ... is a fine, generous, comprehensive sport, that every true follower delights to see his neighbour partake of. It unites all classes in brotherly union, like Shakespere’s [sic] military offer of brotherhood, ‘be his profession ne’er so mean’.

R.S. Surtees, *The Analysis of the Hunting Field* (1847), p. 155

Select is the circle in which I am moving,
Yet open and free the admission to all;
Still, still more select is that company proving,
Weeded out by the funkier and thinned by the fall;
Yet here all are equal – no class legislation,
No privilege hinders, no family pride:
In the ‘image of war’ show the pluck of the nation;
Ride, ancient patrician! Democracy, ride!

William Bromley-Davenport, ‘The Dream of an Old Meltonian’ (1876)

Introduction

From the early days of the sport fox hunters have been keen to emphasise its democratic nature. One of the more famous articulations in this respect referred to the pastime as the Englishman’s ‘peculiar privilege’.¹ ‘The Field’, claimed John Hawkes in 1808, ‘is a most agreeable coffee-house, and there is more real society to be met with there than in any other situation of life. It links all classes together, from the Peer to the Peasant’.² Unlike other blood sports fox hunting was not restricted to the aristocracy and landed gentry but theoretically open to everyone. ‘It is a fact’, commented Raymond Carr, that fox hunting ‘has always shown a

¹ David C. Itzkowitz used the phrase to title his study of nineteenth-century fox hunting: *Peculiar Privilege: A Social History of Foxhunting, 1753–1885* (Hassocks, Sussex, 1977).

² *The Meynellian Science* (London, 1808), p. 48.

capacity to accommodate all those with the money and the inclination to hunt'.³ It is equally a fact that the social composition of the field has changed markedly over the centuries.

These changes are a result in part of changes in the organisation of hunting. When Peter Beckford recorded his thoughts in 1781 fox hunting was still very much a private enterprise. Individuals formed packs and invited friends to share in their sport. Beckford's biographer, A.H. Higginson, commented in 1937, 'I think I am probably correct in stating that Beckford's pack was what might be called, to-day, a first-class provincial one, whose Master provided excellent sport for himself and his friends and immediate neighbours – but nothing more'.⁴ Beckford hunted when it suited him and bore the expense himself, with no subscriptions and no advertisements of meets. This was typical of the period. The sporting journalist 'Nimrod' – Charles James Apperley (1778–1843) – described an Oxford field in 1790 as consisting of some fifty gentlemen together with a half a dozen farmers.⁵ A 'striking change' loomed on the horizon, however: by the turn of the nineteenth century, fox hunting was becoming 'a *regular* and a *public* activity'.⁶

Many who hunted in the early days of the sport were, like Beckford, country gentlemen, but keen tenant farmers, who could not afford to finance their own kennels, managed to form 'scratch packs', sharing the cost of housing and feeding hounds among likeminded neighbours.⁷ Carr speaks of the 'classic fusion of a great landed aristocrat and his tenant farmers in a common enthusiasm for fox hunting',⁸ and although before the railway hunting was primarily a rural, local affair, from the turn of the nineteenth century an element of urban participation was already detectable: market-town dwellers, 'lawyers, corn dealers, country bankers and shopkeepers' were also forming hunts, while Londoners had Essex

³ Raymond Carr, *English Fox Hunting: A History* (London, 1976), pp. 19, 241–2; see also Itzkowitz, pp. 19–21. Carr and Itzkowitz were the first to dissect the social composition of the nineteenth-century field – Carr revealing its colonisation by the middle classes, Itzkowitz exploring the effects of the agricultural depression on the sport – and remain the experts in this regard. Reviewing Itzkowitz's text David Cannadine pointed to the utility of a closer examination of the economic and social impact of fox hunting on local communities, of 'taking a county and analyzing the fluctuating fortunes of its hunt as influenced by the changing pattern of landownership and the ups and downs of agriculture'. *Social History*, 3/3 (October 1978): pp. 385–7 at p. 387. This challenge, to my knowledge, remains to be taken up.

⁴ A. Henry Higginson, *Peter Beckford Esquire: Sportsman, Traveller, Man of Letters: A Biography* (London, 1937), p. 108.

⁵ Nimrod, *The Life of a Sportsman* (1842; London, 1874), p. 107.

⁶ Carr, p. 45 (emphasis in the original).

⁷ This was especially characteristic of fox hunting in Yorkshire. Itzkowitz, p. 33.

⁸ Carr, p. 28.

and Surrey hunts on their doorsteps.⁹ The speed enabled by Meynell and others would attract new followers, converts who may have been indifferent to ‘the noble science’ of hound work but who liked the altered start times – ten or eleven in the morning rather than the crack of dawn – and relished the pace. Apart from accommodating sore heads, late morning meets allowed for ‘commuters’, for lack of a better term, and in an age before fast cars, hunting was enthusiastically taken up by the young and the fashionable, the attraction ‘the opportunity afforded for hard and exhilarating riding’.¹⁰ The ‘young’ in question were male and they flocked in particular to Leicestershire, often settling for the hunt season in Melton Mowbray, from which they could hunt with a variety of packs: the Quorn, the Cottesmore and the Belvoir were all within hacking distance. By 1812, 69 fox hunting packs had been formally recognised; there were 91 in 1835. Each might have a field as large as a hundred.¹¹

John Cook (1773–1829) estimated that in the 1820s some 10,000 Englishmen were hunting annually,¹² but by that time William Cobbett (1762–1835) was already decrying the decline of the sport and the erosion of the traditional field:

forty years ago, there were *five* packs of *fox-hounds* and *ten* packs of *harriers* kept within *ten miles* of Newbury; and ... now there is *one* of the former (kept, too by *subscription*) and *none* of the latter, except a few couple of dogs ... ‘So much the better’, says the shallow fool, who cannot duly estimate the difference between a resident *native* gentry, attached to the soil, known to every farmer and labourer from their childhood, frequently mixing with them in those pursuits where all artificial distinctions are lost, practising hospitality without ceremony, from habit and not on calculation; and a gentry, only now-and-then residing at all, having no relish for country-delights, foreign in their manners, distant and haughty in their behaviour, looking to the soil only for its rents, viewing it as a mere object of speculation, unacquainted with its cultivators, despising them and their pursuits, and relying, for influence, not upon the good will of the vicinage, but upon the dread of their power. The war and paper-system has brought in nabobs, negro-drivers, generals, admirals, governors, commissaries, contractors, pensioners, sinecurists, commissioners, loan-jobbers, lottery-dealers, bankers, stock-jobbers; not to mention the long and *black list* in gowns and three-tailed wigs.¹³

⁹ Itzkowitz, p. 31. See also F.M.L Thompson, *Gentrification and the Enterprise Culture: Britain 1780–1980* (Oxford, 2001), p. 107.

¹⁰ Itzkowitz, pp. 9–10, quotation at p. 10.

¹¹ Carl B. Cone (ed.), *Hounds in the Morning: Sundry Sports of Merry England. Selections from The Sporting Magazine, 1792–1836* (Lexington, 1981), p. 9.

¹² *Observations on Fox-Hunting* (London, 1826), p. 120.

¹³ William Cobbett, *Rural Rides* (2 vols, London, 1912), vol. 1, p. 38 (emphasis in the original).

The fact that the resented incomers themselves proved keen to take up the sport became another cause of complaint. In 1854 Charles Bindley (1796–1859), writing as ‘Harry Hieover’, grumbled about ‘jackeens who only began hunting yesterday’.¹⁴ The railways had facilitated a steady influx of strangers into the hunt community and transformed fox hunting from Beckford’s time. Yet hunting tourists had been evident from the early days of the sport. The activities of the Berkeley Hunt, a subscription pack in Hertfordshire, provide an early example in this regard. In the now famous case of *Essex v. Capel* (1809), which established that fox hunters had no legal right to cross other peoples’ land without their permission, Serjeant Shepherd, counsel for the plaintiff, commented that ‘several clergymen are descending from their pulpits; Bankers neglecting their counting houses; Brewers running away from their breweries’ to hunt foxes; in one report of his speech he continued to remark that ‘tradesmen, clerks and a variety of persons are all occasionally flocking from London ...’¹⁵ In 1811 Shepherd again argued that the Berkeley hunt had caused the county to be ‘overwhelmed by a set of Londoners’.¹⁶ Such criticisms, although exaggerated, indicate at least public belief in the broadening social composition of the hunt field.

This highly relative democracy did not emerge overnight. Surveying the history of fox hunting from the vantage point of 1899 T.H. Dale observed that in the early, Georgian days of the sport,

country gentlemen, soldiers, and clergymen only could hunt without discredit, for they belonged by birth or profession to the upper classes; but a solicitor who hunted was regarded with suspicion, a doctor did his practice no good by being seen with hounds, and a tradesman who hunted was regarded as being

¹⁴ *Sporting Magazine*, 124 (November 1854): p. 369. For Bindley see the *ODNB*.

¹⁵ *Morning Chronicle*, 26 July 1809; see also *The Times* of the same date, in which the wording varies slightly but clergymen, brewers and bankers are still named. Briefer accounts of this case, for which there is no official report, appeared in the *Ipswich Journal*, 29 July, and the *Hampshire Telegraph and Sussex Chronicle*, 31 July. See also Joseph Chitty, *A Treatise on the Game Laws and on Fisheries*, 2nd ed. (2 vols, London, 1816), vol. 2, pp. 1381–3; John Locke, *A Treatise on the Game Laws of England and Wales* (London, 1866), pp. 45–6, and Bovill, chapter 14. Bovill’s report of Shepherd’s speech, which cites tradesmen and clerks as well as bankers and brewers, is taken from an unspecified copy of a ‘very rare published account of the trial’ (p. 226) found for him by a late Hertfordshire county archivist. My thanks to Rachael Griffin for tracing the various newspaper reports. Trespassing fox hunters continued to be an issue for some Englishmen, including a gentleman with a ten-acre patch of land used to grow mushrooms for Covent Garden market who threatened to shoot any horse or hound who crossed it. When the hunt took him to court Serjeant Wilkins obtained a verdict for the accused and ‘sheeted it home to the “gentlemen trespassers”’. *Windsor and Richmond Gazette*, 1 October 1898. I am grateful to Guy Holborn for bringing this incident to my attention.

¹⁶ ‘Home Circuit. Hertford Assizes, Monday, August 5. Fox-Hunting. Johnson v. Oldacre’, *The Times*, 7 August 1811.

on the high road to bankruptcy. Slowly but surely fox-hunting broke down this prejudice ... and fox-hunting gradually grew to be the sport of the middle classes as much as that of the nobles.¹⁷

Between Hieover and Dale's time many celebrated the increased democracy, the nineteenth-century novelist Anthony Trollope being a case in point. Trollope claimed that by the 1860s the hunting field included 'attorneys, country bankers, doctors, apothecaries ... maltsters, millers, butchers, bakers, innkeepers, auctioneers, graziers, builders, retired officers, judges home from India, barristers who take weekly holidays, stockbrokers, newspaper editors, artists, and sailors'.¹⁸

Trollope believed that this co-mingling promoted a new social equality and in 1908 Charles Richardson again emphasised the changed nature of the field:

What was once – especially in the pre-railway days – the sport of the landed interest and the landlords and their tenants has become the sport of the community at large, and in these times two-thirds of every field are businessmen of sorts, while the remaining third is composed of men and women who are so well endowed with this world's goods that they have no need to work, but are able to live in the country throughout the winter, and maintain a stud of horses, a motor car to take them to and from hunting, and a retinue of servants to administer their wants in the hunting field.¹⁹

Richardson said little about the effects of this transition, but in his history of the Belvoir Dale argued that fox hunting helped to unite town and country,

hounds being owned by a family which in the town represented the country, and to the country brought the refinements of the town. The real value of this in the history of our national life can only be estimated when we consider how perilously near England was, in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, to an unhealthy separation between the life of the town and that of the country. No one who has studied the letters and memoirs of the latter part of the last and the early years of the present century, can fail to notice how great a gulf was then opening between town and country ... life outside the towns was synonymous with all that was dull, unlettered, and uncultured ...²⁰

¹⁷ T.H. Dale, *The History of the Belvoir Hunt* (Westminster, 1899), pp. 39–40.

¹⁸ Anthony Trollope, 'On Hunting', *British Sports and Pastimes, 1868* (London, 1868), p. 75. Defenders of the sport are fond of such lists; sustained statistical analysis of the occupations of hunt subscribers, past and present, remains to be undertaken.

¹⁹ Charles Richardson, *The Complete Foxhunter* (London, 1908), pp. 56–7. For women in the field see below, pp. 36–42.

²⁰ Dale, p. 7.

The ‘lasting division’ between town and country, he argued, ‘was prevented from becoming permanent ... by the growth of fox-hunting ...’²¹

Given that his subject was the hunt financed by the dukes of Rutland, Dale, while lauding the democracy of the field, emphasised throughout his history the role played by the aristocracy in elevating the sport. In the late eighteenth century, he argued, fox hunting ‘was the recreation of statesmen’, and Grafton’s Cabinet included two masters of hounds.²² Dale praised the aristocracy as England’s natural leaders. ‘Great houses’, he claimed,

are not mere accidents in the history of our nation, they are the result of certain inherited qualities in their members. They hold their own in the struggle for existence because they have a capacity to produce, generation after generation, men of the stuff from which rulers, soldiers, and statesmen are made.²³

Fox hunting, in drawing together representatives of various classes, served in his view as a conduit for disseminating aristocratic influence and values throughout English society:

in sharing the sport of his superiors in rank, the young middle-class Englishman began to acquire the virtues and good qualities of a governing race, and to graft on his sturdy common sense, the habits of regularity and the business capacity which have always distinguished his own class, the boldness, the dash, and the endurance that are common characteristics of our aristocracy. It is these latter which have served in our own day to help us create a flourishing province out of a desert, to regenerate an ancient and glorious kingdom, and to rule successfully an immense dependency of mixed races. It is no more defence of a favourite recreation, or excuse for a pursuit in which so many delight, but in a serious spirit of thoughtful deduction from facts, that I claim for fox hunting more particularly that *grafting of aristocratic virtues on a democratic polity* which is the peculiar source of English character and power of rule.²⁴

Hunting, that is, levelled up, ‘one of the ideals’ in sport (as in school life) ‘being to raise all training, mental and bodily, to the level of the higher classes, rather than to bring down the higher to the level of the lower’.²⁵

²¹ Ibid., p. 10. By the late twentieth century this statement was no longer true.

²² Ibid., p. 53.

²³ Ibid., p. 6.

²⁴ Ibid., p. 40 (emphasis added).

²⁵ Ibid.

Aristocratic Packs

Although Dale is somewhat unusual in praising aristocratic virtue – hunting had long been defended rather as a means of distracting the aristocracy from vices such as gambling and drinking – his joint invocation of aristocracy and democracy in describing the sport is typical. It is one of the paradoxes of fox hunting that it has from its origins been characterised as both aristocratic and democratic. The aristocratic element has perhaps been overemphasised: from the beginnings of the sport the aristocracy and gentry together participated. Both Beckford and Meynell, generally acknowledged as the ‘fathers’ of modern hunting, were squires rather than aristocrats, and it was the eventual colonisation of the sport by farmers and the middle classes which enabled it to survive into the twenty-first century. It is certainly true, however, that some of the more famous packs were founded by aristocratic families.²⁶ By the late seventeenth century the duke of Buckingham had a pack of fox hounds in Yorkshire, as did Lord Arundell in Hampshire and Wiltshire and the Duke of Monmouth at Charleton. The Pytchley was acquired from a hunt club by the first Earl Spencer in 1765. The Duke of Beaufort’s hunt was the family pack of the Somersets; the Beaufort hounds switched from hunting stags to the fox in the late eighteenth century and but for a brief interlude in the late nineteenth century (1898–99) the dukes have served as master. They have also been active in promoting the sport. The seventh duke, Henry Somerset (1792–1853), was a leading figure in the Badminton and Windsor hunts; the eighth (1824–1899) founded the Master of Fox Hounds Association (MFHA) and published a book on hunting.²⁷ The ninth duke (1849–1924) ‘became the most respected figure in fox-hunting circles of his time’.²⁸ In the twentieth century Henry Hugh Arthur Fitzroy Somerset (1900–1984), the tenth duke, was a sportsman par excellence: he bred hounds and hunted his own pack for 47 years and, like his grandfather, wrote on hunting; he founded the Badminton horse trials and served both as chairman of the MFHA and president of the British Field Sports Society (BFSS) – as well as president of the Battersea Dogs’ Home.²⁹ The duke was addressed simply as ‘Master’ and his car licence plates bore ‘the proud initials MFH 1’.³⁰ ‘I began’, he wrote, ‘as so many children, especially of my generation, always have done, on a donkey at the tender age of two years old’.³¹ Fewer, perhaps, of his generation received their own pack of harriers as an eleventh birthday present.³² There are

²⁶ On the origins of the aristocratic packs see Carr, pp. 50–54.

²⁷ Beaufort, *Hunting* (London, 1888).

²⁸ Carr, p. 161.

²⁹ Beaufort, *Fox-Hunting* (London, 1980). The BFSS was founded to combat increased criticism of hunting; see Chapter 3 below.

³⁰ Jane Ridley, *Fox Hunting* (London, 1990), p. 171.

³¹ Beaufort, *Fox-Hunting*, p. 9.

³² *Ibid.*, p. 10.

echoes of Beckford in this story and Beckford's *Thoughts on Hunting* is quoted liberally – and lovingly – throughout the duke's book.

Other aristocratic packs with long histories included the Belvoir chronicled by Dale – and more recently by Michael Clayton;³³ the Cottesmore, hunted by the Lowther family from the late seventeenth century; the Grafton, owned by the dukes of Grafton into the late nineteenth century; and the Fitzwilliam. The Fitzwilliam pack was atypical in that it was a Whig pack, although the Spencers were also Whigs.³⁴ When Robert Peel was attempting to repeal the Corn Laws in 1846, 'the Protectionists represented the cream of hunting England'.³⁵ The Fitzwilliam connection with hunting interests continued into the twentieth century, Toby Fitzwilliam serving as secretary of the BFSS between 1931 and 1953.³⁶

Higher still up the social scale, a degree of royal support for fox hunting is also evident from the late eighteenth century. In 1793 the then Prince of Wales and future George IV gave his patronage to the sport. 'At Belvoir', Dale commented, 'the Prince was a sportsman and a convivial companion'.³⁷ It is clear, however, that he did not hunt with any particular distinction and he was the last royal to hunt for some time. Prince Albert had his own harriers and rode out at least a few times with the Belvoir.³⁸ As Prince of Wales the future Edward VII hunted from 1860, with the Belvoir and the Pytchley, among others, although he came to prefer shooting,³⁹ and Frederick Delmé Radcliffe dedicated the third edition of his *Noble Science* to him.⁴⁰ In the next generation Edward, Prince of Wales, took up fox hunting in 1919 and during the 1920s sent horses to Melton Mowbray for the season. Prince George, the Duke of Kent, and Prince Henry, the Duke of Gloucester, joined him at Craven Lodge at times; the Duke of York, subsequently George VI, hunted with the Pytchley in the 1930s.⁴¹

In the twentieth century, it has been argued, the interwar years saw 'more royal glamour than ever', with Princess Elizabeth as well as the royal dukes hunting in the Shires.⁴² But after the Second World War royal participation became a bone of contention. When Princess Anne went hunting in 1972 an opinion poll

³³ *The Duke of Rutland's Hounds: The Belvoir* (Ludlow, Shropshire, 2011).

³⁴ Earl Fitzwilliam supported the Reform Bill of 1832 and the Municipal Act of 1835.

³⁵ Ridley, p. 61, quoting Benjamin Disraeli, *Lord George Bentinck*. The dukes of Rutland were implacable enemies of both parliamentary reform and repeal of the Corn Laws. See Dale, pp. 127–8, 169.

³⁶ Richard H. Thomas, *The Politics of Hunting* (Aldershot, 1983), p. 137.

³⁷ Dale, p. 113.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 170–73.

³⁹ Roger Longrigg, *The History of Foxhunting* (London, 1975), p. 148.

⁴⁰ F.P. Delmé Radcliffe, *The Noble Science: A Few General Ideas on Fox-Hunting*, 3rd ed. (London, 1875).

⁴¹ Michael Clayton, *Endangered Species: Foxhunting – the history, the passion and the fight for survival* (London, 2004), p. 25.

⁴² Longrigg, p. 199.

commissioned by the League Against Cruel Sports indicated that 48 per cent of the public felt she should not hunt, while only 37 per cent believed she should be allowed to participate in the sport.⁴³ In 1978, when the princess was competing in a show-jumping competition, ‘antis’ waved banners which read, ‘Would One Please Stop Hunting Foxes’.⁴⁴ By the 1980s members of the royal family, as Richard H. Thomas commented, had ‘become hostages to their social position’ and ‘ceased to be regular and almost automatic members of the hunting field’.⁴⁵ Twentieth-century monarchs may have hunted while they remained heirs to the throne, but they retired from the field after their accession. The continued participation of Prince Charles and Princess Anne attracted public censure, as did the occasional appearance of Princes William and Harry before the ban.⁴⁶

Hunting Squires

While royals may occasionally have chosen to participate in it, fox hunting was never a royal sport and in the early days the squirearchy was fundamental to its development. The stereotype of the hunting-mad (Tory) ‘booby squire’ had been established as early as 1711 in the person of Addison and Steele’s Sir Roger De Coverley.⁴⁷ This stereotype was reproduced in Henry Fielding’s Squire Western (*Tom Jones*, 1749): Tom endears himself to the squire via his love of hunting and leaping of five-barred gates.⁴⁸ English fox hunting, Lord Chesterfield wrote in disgust in 1751, was fit ‘only for bumpkins and boobies. The poor beasts ... are pursued and run down by much greater beasts than themselves; and the true British foxhunter is most undoubtedly a species appropriated and peculiar to this country,

⁴³ Thomas, p. 94. *The Times* believed she should do as she pleased: 14 December 1972. For the League Against Cruel Sports see Chapter 3.

⁴⁴ *Daily Express*, 13 March 1978, quoted in Venetia Newall, ‘The Unspeakable in Pursuit of the Uneatable: Some Comments on Fox-Hunting’, *Folklore*, 94/1 (1983): pp. 86–90 at p. 88.

⁴⁵ Thomas, p. 55.

⁴⁶ Clayton, *Endangered Species*, p. 35. Prince Charles, who took up hunting in the mid-1970s (originally at the invitation of the Duke of Beaufort) has hunted with over 50 packs. On adverse publicity regarding William hunting see ‘Row as princes taken hunting’, *The Observer*, 31 October 1999; ‘Charles caught in new political row’, *The Guardian*, 2 November 1999; ‘Prince Charles still enjoys thrill of the chase while still legal despite mother’s advice’, *The Guardian*, 6 November 2004; Alastair Campbell, *The Alastair Campbell Diaries, Volume Three: Power and Responsibility, 1999–2001* (London, 2011), p. 151. Tony Blair’s memoirs confirm the fact that Prince Charles actively lobbied the Labour government in support of fox hunting. See Tony Blair, *A Journey: My Political Life* (London, 2010), p. 306.

⁴⁷ See *The Spectator*, 13 July 1711, which speaks of Coverley’s ‘remarkable Enmity towards the Fox’ and his relentless pursuit of them.

⁴⁸ See book 4, chapter 5; book 3, chapter 10.

which no other part of the globe produces'.⁴⁹ 'Fox hunter' would, until the final decades of the eighteenth century, be 'a synonym for a sot, a clown and a dunce'.⁵⁰

In the early days of the sport it was argued that hunting squires, even if not sots or dunces, were not intellectuals and required physical occupation: 'If we did not *Hunt*,' wrote one fox hunter complacently in 1733, 'we should do worse.'⁵¹ Their interest in fox hunting, it was claimed, also anchored them to their country estates in the winter and in so doing helped to preserve rural life and foster community in the provinces. Delmé Radcliffe urged this point in the mid-nineteenth century – 'fox-hunting is the very last link of the chain of amusement which has bound country gentlemen to their homes' – and at that century's end Dale worked assiduously to dispel the booby stereotype, insisting that the 'men full of strong ale, heady port, and strange oaths' had soon been replaced by men of culture and varied tastes: 'By 1770 the examples of Mr. Meynell and Lord Granby had shown that the sport of fox-hunting was as well suited to the man of fashion, of culture, and of affairs, as it was to the sportsman of the Squire Western type, and its popularity was henceforth assured'.⁵² The Manners family, who owned the Belvoir, 'were a many-sided race, with sympathies for literature, for politics and for sport, and as they brought the fashion of London to Belvoir, they made their country castle a place of polished society ...'⁵³ Egerton Brydges had earlier spoken in similar terms of Beckford himself: 'Never had fox or hare the honour of being chased to death by so accomplished a huntsman; never was huntsman's dinner graced with such urbanity and wit. He would bag a fox in Greek, find a hare in Latin, inspect his kennels in Italian, and direct the economy of his stables in exquisite French'.⁵⁴

This tongue-in-cheek portrait notwithstanding, Beckford was certainly not uncultured. Nor were the more famous of the early nineteenth-century masters of fox hounds: James Farquharson (1784–?1870),⁵⁵ George Osbaldeston (1786–1866), Thomas Assheton Smith (1776–1858) or even the somewhat lunatic John ('Jack') Mytton (1796–1834). Such men tended to share similar backgrounds: born into a degree of landed wealth, educated at Eton or Harrow followed by a brief stint at Oxford (Smith was a member of the Bullingdon Club), service in the army or local militia, and as a sheriff or high sheriff. They were sports mad generally, keen cricketers and tennis players, passionate about racing as well as hunting.

⁴⁹ Philip Dormer Stanhope, Earl of Chesterfield, *Letters to his Son* (5 vols, London, 1845–53), vol. 2, p. 176.

⁵⁰ Willoughby de Broke, intro. to 1922 ed. of Cook, *Observations on Fox-Hunting*, p. v.

⁵¹ 'Country Squire', *Essay on Hunting* (London, 1733), p. 15 (emphasis in the original).

⁵² *The Noble Science*, p. 259; Dale, pp. 7, 58.

⁵³ Dale, p. 10.

⁵⁴ Quoted in Beaufort, *Hunting*, pp. 20–21.

⁵⁵ Beckford's biographer also wrote a biography of Farquharson: see Higginson, *The Meynell of the West* (London, 1936).

Farquharson lived within a few miles of Beckford's estate and as a young man might be thought of almost as a disciple: 'During his youth he had the advantage of Beckford's friendship and counsel, the first cover which his newly formed pack drew in 1806 belonged to Beckford, his feeder came from Beckford's kennels, a copy of Beckford's book, inscribed to him by the author, was among his most cherished possessions ...'⁵⁶ Farquharson hunted his own pack in Dorset, at his own expense, for over 50 years. Osbaldeston, who purchased his first hounds when he was 16, built kennels to Beckford's specifications and spent 24 years as an itinerant master of nine different hunts.⁵⁷ Smith served as master of the Quorn, immediately prior to Osbaldeston (1806–16), and later of the Burton hounds in Lincolnshire. He also kept a hundred couple or so of hounds in his own kennel in Hampshire.⁵⁸

While their social backgrounds and sporting interests are comparable, the political allegiances of these early nineteenth-century MFHs varied. Smith exemplifies the Tory squire, a Conservative MP (Andover 1821–31; Caernarvonshire 1832–1841) who raised, at his own expense, a corps of yeoman cavalry during the reform riots of 1832.⁵⁹ Osbaldeston was a Whig, if an ineffectual one: during his time as MP for East Retford (1812–18) he seldom attended Parliament. Mytton was very briefly a Tory MP (Shrewsbury 1819), but stood again, this time unsuccessfully, for Shropshire in May 1831, in support of Grey's reform bill.

Jack Mytton was undoubtedly the most colourful of these men, infamous rather than famous, and no one could have described him as 'polished' in his manners. His hunting career was also more erratic. He served as master of fox hounds for a country extending from Halston in Shropshire into Staffordshire in the period 1818–21 and again in the later 1820s. For much of his life Mytton's antics and practical jokes as well as unorthodox manners in the hunting field prompted only irritation. Posthumously, however, he was viewed with affection and his funeral was attended by some two thousand people. Nimrod wrote a biography of him published in 1837 which, in the early twentieth century, attracted the attention of Virginia Woolf. Mytton, Woolf wrote with a degree of admiration,

begot children and tossed them in the air and pelted them with oranges; he married wives whom he tormented and imprisoned until one died and the other snatched her chance and ran away. While he shaved, a glass of port stood by his side, and as the day wore on he worked through five or six bottles of wine and sopped them up with pound upon pound of filberts ... The shaggy body of primeval man, with all his appetites and aptitudes, seemed to have risen from

⁵⁶ Higginson, *The Meynell of the West*, p. 5.

⁵⁷ On Osbaldeston see E.D. Cuming (ed.), *Squire Osbaldeston: His Autobiography* (London, 1926) and the *ODNB*.

⁵⁸ See John Eardley Eardley-Wilmot, *Reminiscences of the late Thomas Assheton Smith*, 5th ed. (London, 1893) and the *ODNB*.

⁵⁹ Eardley-Wilmot, pp. 132–4.

his grave under the barrows, where the great stones were piled on top of him, where once he sacrificed rams and did homage to the rising sun, to carouse with tipling fox-hunters of the time of George the Fourth ... He had neither beauty of countenance nor grace of manner, yet he bore himself, for all his violence of body and mind, with an air of natural breeding which one can imagine in a savage stepping on his native turf ...⁶⁰

This atavistic fox hunter represented an extreme, but he became legend.

A polar opposite to Mytton can be found in Henry Chaplin (1840–1923), born some five years after Mytton died. Where Mytton was a savage, Chaplin was genteel. He descended from a long line of Tory country gentlemen and, while a minor, inherited a 23,000 acre estate in Lincolnshire. His education consisted of a few years at Harrow and a few terms at Christ Church. Chaplin entered Parliament in 1868, four years after he purchased Lord Henry Bentinck's Burton pack of fox hounds, which he hunted as master. All this, as R.J. Olney comments in his *ODNB* biography of Chaplin, 'was firmly in the squirearchical tradition'. And he was loved for it, viewed as a 'model squire' despite being a rather 'inattentive and only partially resident landlord'.⁶¹ The 'fascinating feature of Chaplin's career', said Carr, 'is that he was considered the model country gentleman of his age' – despite the fact that he ran his estate into the ground.⁶²

At mid-century the manufacturer and political radical Richard Cobden (1804–1865), who fought against the protectionist Corn laws as 'a bastion of aristocratic dominance',⁶³ urged the traditional gentry to recognise, 'This is a new era. It is an age of improvement, it is the age of social advancement, not the age for war or for feudal sports ...'⁶⁴ The gentry, however, continued to pursue their traditional pastimes, and the prosperous middle classes proved only too happy to join in.

Subscription Packs

Chaplin poured money he didn't have into hunting and Osbaldeston often subsidised his various hunts financially; indeed, it has been suggested that this personal underwriting of the cost was the chief reason for his success.⁶⁵ But as the nineteenth century wore on the aristocrat, let alone a squire, was increasingly unable to personally finance the sport, and by the turn of the twentieth century only

⁶⁰ Virginia Woolf, 'Jack Mytton', *The Common Reader*, 2nd ser. (1932; New York, 1948), pp. 135–8.

⁶¹ *ODNB*.

⁶² Carr, p. 162.

⁶³ Wendy Hinde, *Richard Cobden: A Victorian Outsider* (New Haven, 1987), p. 70.

⁶⁴ *Hansard* LXXVIII 113/14, 27 February 1845, quoted *ibid.*, p. 147.

⁶⁵ *ODNB*.

the Pelhams' pack, the Brocklesby,⁶⁶ and the Earl Fitzwilliam's pack had survived as private interests (and not without difficulty). The innovation which allowed fox hunting to continue, in fact to thrive, was increasing resort to subscription: asking hunt followers, that is, to contribute financially to the maintenance of the hunt. The Beaufort and Belvoir hunts both availed themselves of this type of finance. 'New money', as Carr revealed in his history of the sport, 'propped up old hunts'.⁶⁷

New money, and newcomers to the field, were increasingly available. As important and prestigious as the aristocratic packs remained, the nineteenth-century expansion of fox hunting would owe to subscription packs. In 1810 there were 24 such packs; by 1854, there were 100; by the 1860s subscription packs were 'the norm; the private pack increasingly the exception'.⁶⁸ Tradition was being modified, the old blended with the new. Trollope thought that the ideal MFH was

one of those country noblemen or gentlemen whose parks are the glory of our English landscape, and whose names are to be found in the pages of our county records; or if not that, he is one who, with a view to hunting, has brought his family and fortune into a new district, and has found a ready place as a country gentleman among his new neighbours. It has been said that no one should become a member of Parliament unless he be a man of fortune. I hold such a rule to be much more true with reference to a master of hounds.

New money was apparently as welcome as old and Trollope was entirely in favour of subscription packs. It was not good to place unlimited power in any man's hands; the old 'imperialism' was unfit for the modern age. 'Our master of hounds shall be a country gentleman who takes subscription, and who therefore, on becoming autocratic, makes himself answerable to certain general rules for the management of his autocracy'. He must hunt no less than three days per week, be punctual, draw coppices fairly and spend beyond his subscription. 'How he should love his foxes, and with what pertinacity he should kill them!'⁶⁹

The increased preference for subscription packs over 'feudal' ones was not so much a matter of taste as of necessity. Hunting, quite simply, was and remains an expensive pastime. John Cook estimated the cost of hunting three days a week in the mid-1820s at roughly £1,600, four days at over £1,900; Sir Bellingham Graham 'was given £4000 to hunt the Quorn'.⁷⁰ In the Midlands in the 1830s the expense was estimated at somewhere between £4,000 and £6,000 per annum, while

⁶⁶ See George E. Collins, *History of the Brocklesby Hounds, 1700–1901* (London, 1901).

⁶⁷ Carr, p. 160.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 114–15.

⁶⁹ Anthony Trollope, 'The Master of Hounds', in *Hunting Sketches* (1865; New York, 1952), pp. 118, 120, 122 and 125.

⁷⁰ Cook, p. 132; Ridley, p. 33.

the average income of a peer was roughly £10,000.⁷¹ A figure within that range – £5,000 – was estimated for the 1840s.⁷² By 1850 even a ‘middling provincial establishment’ of some 55 couple of hounds and 18 hunt horses would cost £2,500 a year, with a ‘crack five day country’ costing double.⁷³ Henry Chaplin hunted his Burton pack six days a week at his own expense. He went broke.⁷⁴

Fox hunters, however, proved willing to pay for their sport and the very popularity of fox hunting had become a cause for concern by the late nineteenth century. Trollope commented in 1868 on ‘the misery, fast increasing in these days, which comes from the too great number of men who hunt’,⁷⁵ and ‘the year 1870’ was identified by Dale as ‘marking a distinct change’ in the fortunes of the sport, which was ‘making long strides towards’ a ‘great and dangerous popularity’.⁷⁶ But over the course of the nineteenth century fox hunting had also acquired a new social importance. In 1924 Lord Willoughby de Broke provided the following ‘table of precedence’ for mid-Victorian Warwickshire:

The Lord-Lieutenant
 The Master of Foxhounds
 The Agricultural Landlords
 The Bishop
 The Chairman of the Quarter Sessions
 The Colonel of the Yeomanry
 The Member of Parliament
 The Dean
 The Archdeacons
 The Justices of the Peace
 The lesser Clergy
 The larger Farmers.⁷⁷

Farmers and the Hunt

Despite appearing last in the pecking order of Willoughby de Broke’s table, farmers had always been important to the hunt. Even as tenants their cooperation was needed, although Carr is quick to point out that the development of fox hunting ‘would have been a physical, legal and moral impossibility in a community of

⁷¹ Carr, p. 116.

⁷² Ridley, p. 33.

⁷³ Longrigg, p. 121.

⁷⁴ Carr, pp. 161–2; Ridley, p. 79; *ODNB*.

⁷⁵ Trollope, ‘On Hunting’, p. 116.

⁷⁶ Dale, p. 322.

⁷⁷ Lord Willoughby de Broke, *The Passing Years* (London, 1924), pp. 57–8, quoted in Ridley, p. 38.

peasant farmers who owned their land'.⁷⁸ Beckford, as we have seen, believed that farmers were themselves sportsmen and in his view, most were already onside. Nevertheless, a footnote on page 330 of the second edition of *Thoughts on Hunting* included the recommendation that if foxes 'should do any injury to the farmer, make satisfaction for it'. Cook commented some 40 years later on the need to 'gain the good will of the farmers', for 'if any respectable body of persons suffer from hunting it is them; and I think it not only ungentlemanly, but impolitic, to treat them in the field, or elsewhere, otherwise than with kindness and civility'.⁷⁹ Nimrod too noted their importance to the sport:

To every man who is a fox-hunter, it is well known how much it is requisite for a master of hounds to stand well with the yeoman and farmers of his country. They have much in their power, and to them Mr. Meynell was uniformly [sic] civil, and even polite. He has been seen more than once to pull out his watch at the place of meeting, and to observe, that the time of throwing off was expired; but, he would say, 'I see Jack ...'s horse here, and he is not come. It is Leicester fair this morning – he is a good fellow, and we will give him a quarter of an hour.' I need not add that he alluded to a sporting grazier, who he knew, was obliged to attend the fair; but as at those fairs the cattle market is early in the morning, a farmer can do his business there, and attend hounds afterwards. Ye masters of fox-hounds, bear this in mind! This is the way to preserve a country!!⁸⁰

In the mid-nineteenth century Hieover addressed the subject of damages directly, buttressing his arguments with the fact that he himself owned 500 acres of land, with three or four hunts on his doorstep. Wheat, he claimed, did not suffer particularly from being ridden over; and while turnips did, hunters avoided doing so. Damaged gates, fences and hedges were repaired by the hunt. All in all, 'if the farmer is rich, and a sportsman, these trifles neither hurt his pocket nor mind; if poor, he is sure to be remunerated'.⁸¹

Apart from being compensated for damage, farmers, 'as "natural" hunting men', should be allowed to hunt foxes too. And so they did: 'the country gentlemen and the farmers composed the two largest hunting groups' in the early nineteenth century.⁸² The game laws precluded many from shooting; the winter fox-hunting season as well as the late morning start conveniently coincided with farmers' leisure time; and during the Napoleonic Wars high agricultural prices increasingly enabled them to afford the expense. However, while farmer and landlord met in

⁷⁸ Carr, p. 49. Cook, in 1826, commented on the fact that French farmers were unwilling to allow hunters access (pp. 117–18).

⁷⁹ Cook, p. 87.

⁸⁰ Nimrod, 'Leicestershire', repr. in Cone (ed.), p. 76.

⁸¹ Harry Hieover, *The Hunting-Field*, 2nd ed. (London, 1859), pp. 8–11, quotation at p. 11.

⁸² Itzkowitz, p. 32.

the nineteenth-century hunting field, they did not meet as social equals. The Quorn at mid-century accepted the presence of farmers in the field, Hieover commented, 'But *one* attempt at equality his fate is sealed; aristocracy will often welcome a man of another grade as being with them, but he must not attempt to be one *of* them'.⁸³ His own portrait of the farmer in the field is not complimentary. Frank Holloway is 'master of a nondescript pack of rough and ready dogs, that will hunt any thing, and at times hunt all things'. He is also a wrestler.⁸⁴ Hieover paints a similarly unflattering portrait of a pack dominated by 'a rather unusual number of wealthy farmers', 'substantial men', but a 'rough and ready lot'. While a number of gentlemen hunted with them, they were 'field acquaintances' only.⁸⁵ 'A gentleman may, I suppose, speak to a horse dealer or a coltbreaker in the field, or have a long chat with a neighbouring farmer on agriculture without sitting down at table or exchanging visiting cards with either the one or the other'.⁸⁶ In the nineteenth century farmers, if permitted in the field, tended to be excluded from the hunt club, they were not invited to hunt balls and they were socially segregated at hunt breakfasts or lawn meets.⁸⁷ Nor, in this early period, did they have a voice in the management of hunts.

Trollope subsequently provided a more positive picture of social relations in the nineteenth-century field: 'The Master of the hunt is indeed an aristocrat ... but beneath him there is freedom and equality for all ... And this feeling of out-of-door equality has, we think, spread from the hunting-field through all the relations of country life, creating a freedom of manner and an openness of countenance, if we may so call it, which do not exist in the intercourse between man and man in cities'.⁸⁸ Regional variations may also be detected, farmers being particularly active in fox hunting in Yorkshire and rare participants in Surrey. Generally speaking, however, they remained 'a class apart' in the hunting community.⁸⁹ Traditional landowners were 'precise about the distinction between owner-occupiers and tenant-farmers to the extent that tenant-farmers who took over hounds had been known to be refused permission to hunt over their land'.⁹⁰ In the nineteenth century the alliance of 'sporting landlord and tenant farmer' was precisely that described by Raymond Carr, 'an alliance of deference' as well as 'interest'.⁹¹

This alliance was threatened in the final quarter of the nineteenth century by agricultural depression. Where tenant farmers had once identified their economic

⁸³ Harry Hieover, *Sporting Facts and Sporting Fancies* (London, 1853), p. 81. See also *The Sporting World* (London, 1858).

⁸⁴ Hieover, *The Hunting-Field*, p. 148.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 212–13.

⁸⁶ Scrutator to *The Times*, quoted in Itzkowitz, p. 26.

⁸⁷ Itzkowitz, p. 35.

⁸⁸ 'On Hunting', p. 77.

⁸⁹ Itzkowitz, p. 33.

⁹⁰ Thomas, p. 149.

⁹¹ Carr, p. 49.

interests with those of their landlords, relations between the two groups became strained. R.S. Surtees had pointed out at mid-century that there were farmers and farmers: ‘There is all the difference in the world between a Leicestershire or Northamptonshire grazier, or a Norfolk or Northumbrian Farmer’, ‘opulent and independent men’, and ‘the little scratching-holders-at-will we too often meet with, who seem to be running a starving match between themselves and the land and look likely to make a dead heat of it’.⁹² In his view farmers were ‘the best’ men in the field, as well as the ‘most easily pacified’. ‘Plenty of farmers out hunting’ he believed to be the most convincing evidence of the nation’s prosperity: ‘when times are adverse, then Farmers do not hunt’.⁹³ But he feared that in his own time farmers could no longer afford to hunt – and by the century’s end times were adverse indeed.

Prevented from participating themselves, farmers appear to have increasingly resented fox hunters. The new rural tension owed in part to the sheer increase in popularity of hunting: from the 1860s, as the numbers and size of fox hunts, and the demand for foxes to hunt, increased, so too did damage to crops, poultry and fences. The emergence of the ‘commercial farmer’ and more intensive farming, commented on as early as 1875, was a source of friction, and during the depression

farmers, who had in the past turned a blind eye to a few chickens taken by foxes or a fence rail knocked down, began to realize that these might well represent the margin between profit and loss. Many who had been friendly to the hunt in good times began to question whether the continuance of hunting was worth the price they had to pay.⁹⁴

An economically prosperous farmer was willing to tolerate a degree of damage; when times were hard, that willingness evaporated. Some farmers turned ‘vulpicide’, shooting or poisoning foxes, and by the 1890s they were flooding the press with letters of complaint. Hunting was no longer the local, rural, traditional affair of Beckford’s day; farmers themselves could not afford to hunt and the hunting field was increasingly made up of rich outsiders.⁹⁵ The wife of an MFH acknowledged changing circumstances of both farmers and their landlords in an essay published in 1894, pointing to the anxiety of a farmer watching the hunt ride over his crops:

⁹² [R.S. Surtees], *The Analysis of the Hunting Field* (1847; London, 1904), p. 169. See generally Chapter 14, ‘The Farmer’. For Surtees see Chapter 4 below.

⁹³ *Ibid.*, pp. 177, 179 and 174.

⁹⁴ Itzkowitz, p. 154. For the effect of the agricultural depression on fox hunting see Chapter 10 and the Conclusion. See also Carr, pp. 217–23.

⁹⁵ These complaints continued into the early twentieth century and were debated in the national press. See, e.g., ‘Fox-hunting and poultry-keeping: The grievance and the remedy’, *The Times*, 26 November 1913; ‘Fox-hunting and farmers’, *The Times*, 29 November 1913.

Possibly that farmer ‘in a happier day than this’ rode his own nag horse with the best of them, and talked cheerily to his landlord ... But now neither he nor ‘the Squire’ can afford nag horses or shooting parties. It is all toil and moil, all work and no play, for the occupier; and very likely the landlord ... feels shy of the tenants for whom he is unable to do all they have been accustomed to.⁹⁶

Her contemporary Alice Hayes spoke more bluntly of a deliberate hostility from farmers, expressed in the use of wire on top of gates, or wire put up solely for the hunting season and removed once it had ended.⁹⁷

Hunts responded in part by a greater willingness to pay damages for poultry and crops (as well as treating farmers to hunt dinners). But the increased, and increasingly vocal, discontent ultimately led to recognition that farmers should be allowed a greater say in the actual management of hunts. This recognition became an even greater necessity in the twentieth century, as radically changing patterns of landownership in England – the transition from tenant farmers to owner-occupiers – changed the face of the field. The post-First World War break-up of the great estates and the economic and political decline of the aristocracy meant that the owner-occupier farmer would become ‘the mainstay of hunting’.⁹⁸ Tensions did not disappear. In 1928 a ‘Hunt Official’ wrote to *The Times* to point out that the farmers and small-holders who still, by and large, allowed the hunt to ride over their fields, ‘cannot bear the cost as the landlords did in the past’. Hunt committees would have to be responsible in taking up and replacing wire and paying poultry damages in order to retain good will. The ‘field and the farmer’, he claimed, were now virtually unknown to each other. Farmers had themselves to be cultivated, and this would mean high subscription fees.⁹⁹

After the Second World War at least one source of conflict was eased by the ‘steady growth of battery hen egg production’, which placed many hens beyond the reach of their ancient enemy¹⁰⁰ While poultry damages decreased, lines of social demarcation certainly remained. Farmers, for example, had no authority within the British Field Sports Society. Founded in 1930, its leadership was relentlessly aristocratic: in 1947, 19 of the society’s 23 vice-presidents were titled men.¹⁰¹ But that society was careful to nurture its relationship with the older National Farmers’

⁹⁶ Mrs Chaworth Musters, ‘The Wife of the M.F.H.’, in Lady Violet Greville (ed.), *Ladies in the Field: Sketches of Sport* (New York, 1894), p. 78.

⁹⁷ Alice M. Hayes, *The Horsewoman: A Practical Guide to Side-Saddle Riding*, 2nd ed. (New York, 1903), p. 358.

⁹⁸ Thomas, p. 61.

⁹⁹ ‘Fox Hunting: The field and the farmer’, *The Times*, 22 November 1928.

¹⁰⁰ Thomas, p. 93. One alleged cruelty had been replaced by another.

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.*, p. 137. The founder of that society, Fred Beadle, was not an aristocrat himself but he sought the assistance of Lord Bayford, Lord Fortescue and the Duke of Beaufort in creating it, and aristocrats dominated its offices. BFSS Annual Report 1943–8, p. 8, quoted in Thomas, p. 149.

Union (NFU), established in 1908. During the Second World War it acknowledged and thanked the thousands of farmers who took over hounds, enabling hunting to survive.¹⁰² The NFU would be seen as hunting's 'greatest ally' when the sport came under political attack in the late 1940s,¹⁰³ and in 1952 *The Times* commented at some length on the importance of farmers in the hunt field: 'as the great estates broke up and the "idle rich" grew poor ... the farmers, who are more prosperous than they used to be, rallied to the cry that fox-hunting was in danger'. The Duke of Beaufort was still hunting six days a week, but the average meet of the season 'was better attended than were those of earlier years by mounted farmers'.¹⁰⁴

The Clergy

Where the farmer would assume an increasingly important place in the twentieth-century field, an earlier stalwart, the hunting parson, virtually disappeared. The late eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century clergyman was often a younger son of the local squire – a member, that is, of the gentry. As such, they were early enthusiasts of the sport and generally in 'a perfect situation to indulge' their taste.¹⁰⁵ Even at the turn of the nineteenth century their participation was not uncontroversial: should a fisher of men also be a hunter of beasts? questioned one correspondent to the *Gentleman's Magazine* in 1802.¹⁰⁶ And again there appear to have been regional variations, clergymen who not merely hunted but kept their own hounds being especially common in Devon and Dorset. The Reverend William Daniel (1753–1833) published an early treatise on field sports: *Rural Sports* (1801).¹⁰⁷ In the first of his *Hunting Songs*, 'The Woore Country' (1834), Rowland Egerton-Warburton (1804–1891) wrote happily of 'Henry, the purple-clad Vicar' and commented,

Were my life to depend on the wager,
I know not which brother I'd back;
The Vicar, the Squire, or the Major,
The Purple, the Pink, or the Black.

¹⁰² See Ridley, p. 168; Clayton, *Endangered Species*, pp. 44–51.

¹⁰³ Thomas, p. 150. On this subject see Chapter 5 below.

¹⁰⁴ 'Fox-hunting up to date I–Farmers and field sport since the war', *The Times*, 7 March 1952. See also 'II–Scarlet and tractor in harmony', 8 March 1952. Emma Griffin argues that fox hunting 'was not conceived as part of a common culture shared with the broader rural community' until the second half of the twentieth century (p. 188), from which time it worked to 'recast' itself as a rural sport (p. 190). I am not sure that this is true, but certainly fox hunters worked harder to promote a unified rural image once hunting came under sustained attack.

¹⁰⁵ Itzkowitz, p. 36.

¹⁰⁶ Quoted *ibid.*, p. 37. For clerical objections to blood sports see Chapter 3 below.

¹⁰⁷ Itzkowitz, p. 36.

At mid-century the arch-traditionalist Hieover was still praising hunting clergymen:

That tall gentlemanly man on the brown in such fine condition is a clergyman, with a good living, and moderate independent property, a perfect sportsman, fine quiet rider, and a perfect gentleman; he keeps two hunters, and hunts twice a week. His horses are first-rate, he steals away quietly with the hounds, and no matter what the country, there he stays; he pays his curate liberally though only availing himself of his services one month in the year; in fact, in the church, drawing-room, or field, he is liked by anyone. If you want a pilot, keep your eye on him ...¹⁰⁸

As the nineteenth century wore on, however, such participation was increasingly frowned upon and ‘hunting clergymen definitely felt on the defensive’ by the 1870s.¹⁰⁹ Jane Ridley – who has a knack for a turn of phrase – commented that ‘a hunting parson was soon no more acceptable than a pregnant smoker today’.¹¹⁰

The Reverend Charles Kingsley (1819–1875), canon of Chester and Westminster and chaplain to Queen Victoria, remained one of the old school, believing that fox hunting fostered manly virtue rather than constituting in itself vice. ‘I know that He has made me a parish priest ... but did He too let me become a strong, daring, sporting wild man of the woods for nothing?’¹¹¹ Clergymen, however, gradually disappeared from the field. Increased expense may have been one factor, but public disapproval of the participation of parsons had increased: Trollope identified a ‘strong feeling against a clergyman who hunts’ by the late 1860s.¹¹² The ‘hunting parson survived longest’, Carr argues, ‘in the West Country and the Fells of the Lake District’, and he cited John (‘Jack’) Russell (1795–1883), the ‘Sporting Parson’, as an example of the dying breed. Russell, who gave his name to a breed of terriers, ‘pursued everything from hares and foxes to otters and stags, so that a quarry was available all year round’.¹¹³ At Iddesleigh in the 1820s he found an opportunity to form his own fox hunt: the local population had traditionally rung the church bell when a fox was spotted and assembled to kill it with axes or sticks. Russell sought and was granted permission to kill foxes ‘in a more English way’; he then built artificial earths for fox cubs and fed them until they were big enough to be hunted. His bishop, Henry Phillpotts, protested, but

¹⁰⁸ Hieover, *The Hunting-Field*, p. 146.

¹⁰⁹ Itzkowitz, p. 66.

¹¹⁰ Ridley, p. 53. On this subject see generally pp. 52–4.

¹¹¹ Lionel Edwards, *Famous Foxhunters* (London, 1932), pp. 59–60, quotation at p. 60.

¹¹² Trollope, ‘On Hunting’, p. 102.

¹¹³ Carr, p. 177.

was unable to prevent Russell's sport.¹¹⁴ Almost as famous were hard-riding John Empson (1789–1861), known as 'The Flying Parson' or 'Lincoln Crow',¹¹⁵ and 'Spurting Bullen', vicar of Eastwell, who often wore hunting clothes under his surplice, announced meets from the pulpit and hunted until he was 90.¹¹⁶

A few stubborn clerical fox hunters persisted into the twentieth century. In *Memoirs of a Fox-Hunting Man* Siegfried Sassoon contrasts the 'angry-faced old parson' who shouted 'Brutes! Brutes!' over his garden fence as the hunt passed with the 'jolly sporting parson' who rode with them.¹¹⁷ E. Milne, master of the Cattistock, hunted from the turn of the century until 1931. But such men had become a rarity. The sporting artist Lionel Edwards (1878–1966), in his 1952 foreword to a reprint of Trollope's *Hunting Sketches*, commented, 'there is, and always has been, an urban section of the public who look on all field sports as cruel; these also condemn the Church for taking part in them'. The 'marked diminution' in the ranks of sporting clergy he attributed not only to the expense of hunting – three days a week in the Midlands at mid-century would cost the fox hunter some £6,832 per year – but also to demographic change. 'My own experience leads me to believe that the average country clergyman to-day seems to be really a townsman – doubtless a good chap, but out of touch with rural matters, including sport'.¹¹⁸ In 1951 hunting parsons were seldom to be found in the some 238 packs of fox hounds hunting in England. The breed had not entirely died out: the Reverend John Ashley hunted with the Belvoir from 1966, following on foot from 1978, and served as chairman of the Belvoir Hunt Supporters' Club from 1969 to 1983.¹¹⁹ But by the late twentieth century the established church opposed fox hunting and clergymen who persisted in the sport were 'outed' by hunt saboteurs.¹²⁰

The Urban Middle Class

As Carr has shown, while fox hunting retained aristocratic associations throughout the nineteenth century it was also colonised in that period by the town-dwelling

¹¹⁴ ODNB. See also E.W.L. Davies, *The Out-of-Door Life of the Rev. John Russell* (London, 1883).

¹¹⁵ See Guy Paget and Lionel Irvine, *The Flying Parson and Dick Christian* (London, 1934).

¹¹⁶ Michael Clayton, *Foxhunting in Paradise* (London, 1993), p. 120.

¹¹⁷ Siegfried Sassoon, *Memoirs of a Fox-Hunting Man* (1928; London, 1975), p. 165.

¹¹⁸ Edwards, 'Introduction', Trollope's *Hunting Sketches*, p. 31. For Lionel Edwards see the ODNB and J.N.P. Watson, *Lionel Edwards: Master of the Sporting Scene* (London, 1986).

¹¹⁹ Michael Clayton, *The Duke of Rutland's Hounds: The Belvoir* (Ludlow, Shropshire, 2011), p. 191 (photo p. 193).

¹²⁰ Thomas, pp. 52–3.

middle classes. This colonisation had earlier roots: the Lord Mayor of London had kept a pack of hounds in the eighteenth century and in 1792 the *Sporting Magazine* listed four packs of fox hounds hunting within a 20-mile diameter of the City.¹²¹ The social aspirations of the nouveau riche created a common sporting-cultural cause and the advent of the railway allowed a new degree of mobility, both physically and socially. Horses and hounds could be sent to distant meets by train, a practice dating from 1846 and common by 1860.¹²² The railways increased the size of the field and enabled a new choice of meets so that fox hunting ceased to be a local affair. The 99 hunts listed in 1850 had increased to 115 by 1867 and to 137 by 1877, testament to the sport's growing popularity.¹²³ In the same year – 1869 – that fox hunting was attacked on moral grounds in the *Fortnightly Review*, *Baily's Magazine* identified it as 'the most fashionable of all winter recreations and pastimes'.¹²⁴ It was not just Londoners who joined in, but urban would-be sportsmen from the new industrial northern towns, Liverpool and Manchester, Birmingham and Leeds.¹²⁵ Hieover, predictably, was censorious about the presence of the nouveau riche in the field and disparaged their efforts. Unlike the gentlemanly clergyman who could do no wrong, the gentleman who made his fortune by business and bought a country estate 'is always doing wrong, riding over hounds, heading back a fox into cover, giving wrong information to the huntsman'; a wealthy distiller and banker 'gives long prices for his horses; but they are always fat' and require 'a fortnight to recover a moderate run'.¹²⁶ Such criticisms notwithstanding, by the 1860s field sports, including fox hunting, had become a 'most serious influence' on the lives not merely of the upper classes but of the middle class as well.¹²⁷ Delmé Radcliffe welcomed their participation, writing in his *Noble Science*,

I fear that should these pages ever meet the eye of a radical, the tone and sentiment will be condemned as *rococo*, to an intolerable degree; but in upholding the genus *gentleman*, above all others, I should be very sorry to be mistaken, or supposed capable of casting a reflection upon, or of undervaluing the sterling worth of the middle classes, constituting, in fact, the great body of the people of England. So far from entertaining any such unworthy feeling, I would infinitely prefer to shake hands with honest and albeit vulgar tradesmen

¹²¹ Carr, p. 39.

¹²² Itzkowitz, p. 51. For the effect generally of the advent of the railway on fox hunting, see *ibid.*, Chapter 4, and Carr, Chapter 7.

¹²³ Itzkowitz, p. 53.

¹²⁴ E.A. Freeman, 'The Morality of Field Sports', *Fortnightly Review*, 6 (October 1869): pp. 353–85; *Baily's Magazine* 16 (February 1869): p. 108.

¹²⁵ Itzkowitz, p. 59; Thompson, p. 108.

¹²⁶ Hieover, *The Hunting-Field*, pp. 145–6.

¹²⁷ Trollope, 'Preface', *British Sports and Pastimes*, pp. 4–5.

either in the hunting field, or at their counter, than with many of their most refined customers ...

He could not, however, 'go the length of some writers upon the state of society, who, taking exception for rule, and forgetting the vast disproportion which the aristocracy bears in numbers, – are disposed to arrogate to the middling classes an undue share of the whole moral worth and honour of the nation'.¹²⁸

Radicals were enraged by middle-class enthusiasm for hunting, and the eagerness with which the urban middle classes took up the sport was a cause of despair for both Cobden and John Bright (1811–1889). 'Manufacturers and merchants', wrote the exasperated Cobden in 1863, 'as a rule seem only to desire riches that they may be enabled to prostrate themselves at the feet of feudalism'. 'We are a servile, aristocrat-loving people who regard the land with as much reverence as we still do the peerage'.¹²⁹ No one listened, middle-class colonisation of the sport continued and social snobbery was not necessarily always the reason. Some simply loved the activity for its own sake. Anthony Trollope is a famous example of a nineteenth-century middle-class enthusiast; the historian Hugh Trevor-Roper might be seen as his mid-twentieth-century counterpart. Both were mad about fox hunting despite not being particularly adept on horseback. Trevor-Roper, who hunted with the Bicester and the South Oxfordshire Hounds, was like Trollope short-sighted and accident prone in the field, 'a brave but not a good horseman' who suffered frequent falls and 'would often be seen on his knees, scrambling around trying to find his spectacles'.¹³⁰ He also attracted censure from academic colleagues, who thought fox hunting 'an unsuitable pastime for an intellectual'.¹³¹ This didn't seem to bother him, but Trevor-Roper did eventually give up the sport after breaking his back for the second time and spending three months in plaster. He sold his hunter to a wealthy pupil – in a tutorial.¹³²

Carr claims that by the 1970s fox hunting's 'greatest supporters were a section of the town-dwelling middle class', Griffin that in that decade the sport was finally losing its exclusive character.¹³³ Pop stars such as Malcolm Allured, a former member of Showaddywaddy, would take up hunting.¹³⁴ Clearly, at least some members of the twentieth-century urban middle class, like their nineteenth-

¹²⁸ Delmé Radcliffe, pp. 125–6. Social snobbery did of course continue; the vulgar, loud-mouthed, coarse-featured 'newly rich' Bill Jaggett is thoroughly condemned by Siegfried Sassoon as a horror in the field, the nouveau riche equivalent of the booby squire and a clumsy horseman at that. See *Memoirs of a Fox-Hunting Man*, pp. 119–20.

¹²⁹ Quoted in Carr, pp. 130 and 152.

¹³⁰ Adam Sisman, *Hugh Trevor-Roper: The Biography* (London, 2010), pp. 59–60. For more on Trevor-Roper's hunting accidents see pp. 103, 179.

¹³¹ From the caption to 'On horseback', in Sisman.

¹³² Sisman, p. 179.

¹³³ Carr, p. 242; Griffin, p. 190.

¹³⁴ See illustration 13 in Clayton, *Foxhunting in Paradise*.

century predecessors, found in rural sports both ‘relaxation and a confirmation of status’.¹³⁵ Their participation continued to exasperate critics who viewed fox hunting as a contemptible feudal relic: there is little, in fact, to distinguish twenty-first-century polemics on the subject from Cobden’s nineteenth-century teeth-grashing. Vide George Monbiot in the *Guardian*:

Not everyone who hunts today is a member of the aristocracy – far from it. But this is the way in which you aspire to become one. To look posh you buy a Land Rover, green wellies, a tweed hat and a waxed jacket: the livery of field sports. You buy a house in the country. You get yourself a horse and you join the hunt. The residual power of the landed class arises from other people’s aspirations. The British remain mesmerised by our pre-democratic rulers.¹³⁶

Women and Children

Claims that fox hunting had become England’s ‘national’ sport by the 1830s reveal a marked gender bias, in that throughout the nineteenth century fox hunters were overwhelmingly male. Before Meynell, before enclosure of the countryside, fox hunting had been a sport for older men. Faster hounds, faster horses and fences to jump at a gallop drew in young men, and into the 1830s these men tended to be ‘fast’ in every sense of the word. Given nineteenth-century proprieties, women – at least the respectable ones – were therefore unlikely to be found in the field. There were a few exceptions and by the 1830s women were increasingly common in Melton, a sign, Carr argues, ‘of the fact that shire hunting was becoming the sport of the upper classes’ more generally.¹³⁷ In 1836 *The Times* reproduced an article from a sporting paper titled ‘Fox-hunting ladies’, which opened, ‘I am not aware of any picture more beautiful than an elegant female on horseback’ and went on to praise Lady Grosvenor and Lady Helen Lowther’s riding skills in the field.¹³⁸ Roger Longrigg identified such women as ‘ladies brought up in the shadow of the stable and the kennel’.¹³⁹ Lower down the social scale and far less typical were Mrs Loraine Smith and her daughters, relations of a sporting artist (1838), a Miss Stone and a Miss Nellie Holmes (1841).¹⁴⁰ In the first half of the nineteenth century female fox hunters tended to be titled or tarts, to put it bluntly. Hieover

¹³⁵ Carr, p. 242.

¹³⁶ George Monbiot, ‘Class war on the hoof: fox hunting is a remnant of feudal society – and that is why we have to ban it’, *The Guardian*, 14 September 2004.

¹³⁷ Carr, p. 45.

¹³⁸ ‘Fox-hunting ladies’, *The Times*, 22 September 1836.

¹³⁹ Longrigg, p. 144.

¹⁴⁰ John and Edward Elliott, *Fifty Years of Foxhunting with the Grafton and Other Packs of Hounds* (London, 1900), quoted in Hayes, p. 304; Meriel Buxton, *Ladies of the Chase* (London, 1987), p. 44.

praised the Marchioness of Salisbury, wife of the 'nominal' owner of the Hatfield hunt, as 'the perfection of a hunting horsewoman'; she 'rode as straight and boldly as I have hold any gentlewoman should ride'.¹⁴¹ 'Skittles' rode equally well but was not quite a gentlewoman. Catherine Walters (1839–1920), to give her her proper name, a former circus equestrienne, became at 16 the mistress of Lord Fitzwilliam, master of the Fitzwilliam hounds, and subsequently hunted with the Quorn.¹⁴² The sport from its early days also attracted headstrong girls such as Kate Stanley (1842–1874), subsequently Vicountess Amberley and the mother of Bertrand Russell. After her first hunt she wrote happily to her mother that she preferred fox hunting to parties.¹⁴³

In the mid-nineteenth century female participation remained both rare and controversial, and *The Field* was firmly of the opinion that women should not hunt at all. Hieover encouraged young women to take up the sport for the good of their health, rather than attempting to be pale and interesting,¹⁴⁴ but he was still thinking primarily in terms of aristocratic ladies; middle-class young women he identified as enemies of hunting.¹⁴⁵ Over the next two decades this picture slowly altered: by 1870 *The Field* had changed its mind and two years earlier *Baily's Magazine* had published a short story with a hunting heroine. In the 1880s hunting attracted tomboys such as Mary Carbery (1867–1949), who longed for male freedoms and sporting pastimes, to exchange her 'silly frock' for breeches, to play cricket and hunt. Hunt she did, but side saddle and still inwardly rebellious, resenting the fact that she had to bow her head rather than touch her 'manly little hat' on meeting others in the field.¹⁴⁶

¹⁴¹ Hieover, *The Hunting-Field*, p. 28. The Duke of Beaufort too commented admiringly on her prowess in the field. *Hunting*, p. 14.

¹⁴² ODNB; see also Buxton, pp. 72–6.

¹⁴³ Bertrand and Patricia Russell (eds), *The Amberley Papers: The Letters and Diaries of Lord and Lady Amberley* (London, 1937), p. 13.

¹⁴⁴ Hieover, *The Hunting-Field*, p. 3.

¹⁴⁵ Ibid., pp. 4–5. Hieover's contempt for female critics of the sport is shot through with class snobbery. It was only the 'town-bred and half-bred miss', he argued, who 'may hold a lady knowing anything of a horse as contra-feminine, forgetting that ignorance in this way arises from her parents and parents' ancestors never having been in a position in life to have any. The young lady forgets, or rather overlooks, that, from similar causes, she is a no better judge of pictures, bronzes, marquetry, or exotics than she is of horses, whereas the high-born woman is equally a judge of all from possessing, and having possessed, them'. 'Probably', he sneered, the same young lady's papa is so far honoured as occasionally to entertain the master of a shop ...' (pp. 4–5). He continues on the subject at some length: 'Mr Gauzecollar', the object of one young woman's affection, who hails from Cheapside, 'never took a leap in his life, unless over his own counter' (p. 5).

¹⁴⁶ Mary Carbery, *Happy World: The Story of a Victorian Childhood* (London, 1941), pp. 48–51.

Female participation continued to remain slightly suspect and Trollope expressed reservations on the subject, but he also acknowledged that the presence of women in the field brought certain benefits – and he was far less of a snob:

I own that I like to see three or four ladies out in a field ... Their presence tends to take off from hunting that character of horseyness, – of both fast horseyness and slow horseyness, – which has become, not unnaturally, attached to it, and to bring it within the category of gentle sports. There used to prevail an idea that the hunting man was of necessity loud and rough, given to strong drinks, ill adapted for the poetries of life, and perhaps a little prone to make money out of his softer friend ... That a man may hunt without drinking or swearing, and may possess a nag or two without any propensity to sell it or them for double their value, is now beginning to be understood. The oftener that women are to be seen ‘out’, the more will such improved feelings prevail as to hunting, and the pleasanter will be the field to men who are not horsey, but who may nevertheless be good horsemen.¹⁴⁷

Lady Violet Greville likewise commented on the positive effects of women in the field; their presence might ‘refine the coarser ways of men, and contribute to the gradual disuse of bad language ... and to the adoption of a habit of courtesy and kindness’.¹⁴⁸ By the end of the nineteenth century ‘hunting ladies’, Jane Ridley concluded in her history of the sport, ‘in a sense ... filled the gap left by the retreating hunting parson. They acted as moral air fresheners’.¹⁴⁹

Even in the 1890s women made up no more than 10 per cent of the field in Leicester, but their numbers were increasing and they had begun to write themselves into hunting literature.¹⁵⁰ In the preface to the second edition of her manual on horsemanship for women (1903) Alice Hayes noted that ‘English ladies regard riding, principally, from a hunting point of view’ and the bulk of her 473-page text is premised on that assumption.¹⁵¹ Wife of Captain Matthew Horace Hayes, a veterinary surgeon who published extensively on riding and hunting, Hayes was neither aristocrat nor prostitute and she was quick to reassure anxious mothers that hunting was unlikely to present their daughters with moral dangers. The vast majority of fox hunters, she insisted, were too preoccupied by hunting itself to ‘indulge in flirtation’ and the field was too public a place for indiscretions. The choice of a suitable companion to escort a young lady to and from the hunt would ensure that she was no more at risk than she would be in a ballroom or at the theatre.¹⁵²

¹⁴⁷ Trollope, ‘The Lady who rides to hounds’, *Hunting Sketches*, pp. 68–70.

¹⁴⁸ Greville, p. v.

¹⁴⁹ Ridley, p. 58.

¹⁵⁰ Itzkowitz, p. 56.

¹⁵¹ Hayes, p. vii.

¹⁵² *Ibid.*, p. 375.

By Hayes's time hunting had also become physically less dangerous for women: just as changes in the design of the cross saddle in the eighteenth century had enabled the flying leap for men, the invention of the 'leaping head' side saddle, with a downward curving horn to hold the left thigh in place, made a woman's seat more secure.¹⁵³ Dress was also altered, the billowing skirts of the old riding habit replaced by an 'apron' worn over breeches, facilitating modesty while decreasing the risk of accidents.¹⁵⁴ Trollope's fictional Lizzie Eustace wonders anxiously as she prepares for her first hunt whether, at 'some desperate fence', she would be 'thrown off and break her nose and knock out her front teeth?',¹⁵⁵ but she was in much greater danger of being dragged or fallen upon. Violet Greville recounted the example of a young woman whose horse took a high fence against her will. Her 'weak resistance succeeded in landing him on his head in a deep ditch' and, hung upside down by her old-style skirt, she was carried away by the panicked horse, her own head bumping along the ground, before another horse and rider landed on top of her. 'Everyone', Greville commented coolly, 'has seen similar casualties, and men, as well as women, dragged on their heads; it is the most alarming part of hunting'.¹⁵⁶

Few women rode astride until after the First World War, although the Duke of Beaufort cited an early nineteenth-century French baroness as riding in this fashion, 'her nether woman ... clad in boots and leather breeches'.¹⁵⁷ Hayes, a highly proficient horsewoman, insisted that women had insufficient strength in their thighs to ride cross saddle well and that the side saddle afforded a more secure seat.¹⁵⁸ In some circumstances, it was too secure: even advocates of side-saddle riding admitted that if a horse fell it was very difficult for a woman

¹⁵³ For the history and design of the altered saddle see Hayes, pp. 33–6 and figs. 12 and 13. Buxton, p. 64, provides an illustration of the old-fashioned pommels which simply cupped the rider's right thigh and the new version in which the lower pommel formed the leaping head. The saddles in question belonged respectively to Queen Victoria and Elizabeth II.

¹⁵⁴ See Ridley, pp. 81–2. Hayes advised the female novice to take her first riding lessons with a female instructor so that she could dispense with the apron and allow her teacher to ensure her legs were properly positioned. Once this lesson had been learned the apron could be donned and a male riding instructor employed (pp. 3–4).

¹⁵⁵ Anthony Trollope, *The Eustace Diamonds* (1873; London, 2004), p. 375.

¹⁵⁶ Greville, pp. 50–51.

¹⁵⁷ Beaufort, *Hunting*, p. 15. The baroness's quarry were primarily wolves.

¹⁵⁸ Hayes, p. 427. She admitted that having learned to ride side-saddle no doubt prejudiced her against the cross saddle. I can vouch for the opposite experience: having grown up riding astride I found the side-saddle seat alarmingly precarious. But by the end of the nineteenth century at least some girls had experience with both styles, allowed to use the cross saddle until they were 12 or 14. Buxton, p. 99. Sydney Mitford (1880–1963) had the pommel of her side saddle fixed to the off side for four weeks of the year when she was a child, so that her left hip grew in alignment with the right. Deborah Devonshire, *Wait for Me! Memoirs of the Youngest Mitford Sister* (London, 2010), p. 31.

to disengage her legs from the pommel. Lord Paget reported in 1987 that he had been taught as a boy that women, with their ‘soft round thighs’, rode side saddle not by choice but of necessity, and expressed his relief that such views had been debunked as nonsense: ‘As I write I can see the two fences where Mrs Mason and ten years later my beautiful sister-in-law died because their pommels prevented them getting clear’.¹⁵⁹ But in the nineteenth century safety issues were not the only concern; aesthetic objections to women riding cross saddle were also raised. These are evident in Hayes’s account of her own experiment: ‘I practised my cross-saddle riding in a school well supplied with large mirrors in which I could see my figure as I passed. It was anything but graceful, for the rotundity, which even in some men is very ugly on horseback, was far too much *en evidence*, and caused an outburst of laughter from the ladies who were watching my performance’.¹⁶⁰

Issues of dress and physical safety aside, contradictory reservations were expressed about the behaviour of women in the nineteenth-century hunt field. Some thought they rode too hard, others that they relied too heavily on male ‘pilots’ to guide them. ‘It is, I suppose, a want of independence in the feminine character that makes most women follow some particular man’, commented Lady Greville.¹⁶¹ Equally stereotypical was the complaint of Otho Paget that women talked too much at checks, when they should remain still and silent to allow hounds to recover the lost scent. Yet he hastened to assert that he was not ‘one of those who think that women are in the way out hunting’, and that he had ‘always considered they do much less harm than the men’.¹⁶² Hayes noted somewhat tartly,

Considering that women pay for their hunting and are not on a free list it seems rather superfluous for men to assure them that they do not object to their presence in the hunting field, an announcement which appears in print so often that it sounds like protesting too much. We never hear of hunting women recording the fact that they do not object to the presence of men.¹⁶³

¹⁵⁹ Lord Paget, ‘Foreword’, Buxton, pp. 7–8.

¹⁶⁰ Hayes, p. 427.

¹⁶¹ Greville, p. 50. Hayes believed that the practice of pilots was going out of fashion by the late nineteenth century (pp. 373–4).

¹⁶² Quoted in Hayes, pp. 308, 315.

¹⁶³ Hayes, p. 314. Hayes can be seen as something of a feminist – although her feminism was coloured by class bias and her comments on the social aspirations of farmers’ daughters mirror those of William Cobbett! She resented, for example, the ‘narrow-minded policy of the Royal College of Veterinary Surgeons’ who in 1897 refused to allow Aleen Cust (1868–1937) to sit her professional exams in Edinburgh (p. 349). More radical still was Lady Florence Caroline Dixie (1855–1905), a fox hunter and travel writer who secured an appointment as the *Morning Post*’s war correspondent to cover the Zulu wars and later turned her attention to reform of women’s clothing, royal succession, the marriage service and divorce law. Dixie subsequently changed her mind on hunting and denounced it as cruel in *Horrors of Sport* (London, 1891) and *The Mercilessness of Sport* (London, 1901). *ODNB*.

'No one would dream nowadays,' wrote T.H. Dale in 1903, 'of treating the question of whether women should hunt at all as an open one'.¹⁶⁴ Yet other writers on the sport chose to ignore their existence: Chapter 13 of Richard Carlisle's 1908 history of fox hunting, titled 'The Hunting-Field; Its Manners and Discipline', speaks exclusively of 'hunting-men', 'the sportsman' and 'the average English boy'.¹⁶⁵ Prior to the 1914–1918 war some hunts refused to accept 'lady members' and the institutional structures of hunting remained 'overwhelmingly masculine'.¹⁶⁶ As in so many ways, however, that war proved something of a turning point: women not only hunted but assumed masterships while the men were away. There had been a very few, isolated precedents for female masters in the nineteenth century, notably Lady Salisbury of the Hatfield Hunt, and Victoria, Countess of Yarborough and Master of the Brocklesby Hunt, 1875–80. In both instances the women had taken over temporarily following the death of their husbands.¹⁶⁷ During the First World War fox hunting would necessarily be 'kept going by women, old men, committees and unexpected candidates'.¹⁶⁸ Twelve women served as MFH, including Lady Lowther, acting Master of the Pytchley while her husband was away.¹⁶⁹ If 'lady masters' seemed at that time mere temporary expedients, female presence in the field continued to rise steadily: by 1922 'there were said to be twenty-five women hunting to every one in 1880'. A decade later roughly half of them were riding astride,¹⁷⁰ and after the Second World War the overwhelming majority of women adopted the cross saddle. Standards of propriety had changed and cross-saddle riding had the decided advantage of being less expensive.¹⁷¹

Other late-nineteenth-century female fox hunters, such as Maude Cheape (1853–1919), are best understood as female equivalents of the sporting country gentleman. See Buxton, pp. 95–102 and Maudie Ellis, *The Squire of Bentley (Mrs. Cheape)* (London, 1926).

¹⁶⁴ Quoted in Buxton, p. 94.

¹⁶⁵ Richard Howard Carlisle, *Fox-Hunting Past & Present* (London, 1908), p. 103. In his chapter on hunting statistics he does however include two 'lady masters' (p. 134). He also identifies members of the peerage, baronetage and knightage, retired naval and military officers, and clergymen; see pp. 134–5. The cost of hunting to the individual in this period is analysed at pp. 44–6.

¹⁶⁶ Griffin, p. 167.

¹⁶⁷ Ridley, p. 82.

¹⁶⁸ Longrigg, p. 199.

¹⁶⁹ Ridley, p. 147.

¹⁷⁰ Longrigg, p. 209.

¹⁷¹ Buxton, pp. 99, 105–6, 126, 133 and 145. Cross-saddle clothes as well as the saddle itself were cheaper and, allowing women to ride lighter, permitted them to buy smaller, less expensive horses. For the early twentieth-century debate on the respective advantages of side-saddle and cross-saddle riding see Lady Apsley and Lady Diana Shedden, *'To Whom the Goddess...': Hunting and Riding for Women* (London, 1932). Women who continued to ride side-saddle in the second half of the twentieth century include Lady Wimborne, who hunted in Leicestershire in the 1970s and 80s, Lady Margaret Fortescue, Ann Ear and

As the twentieth century progressed riding would become increasingly feminised: horses, once ridden primarily (although not exclusively) by men with money and tended to by male members of the labouring poor, began to be ridden and cared for by girls and women. A satisfying explanation for this development remains to be determined. To my mind it owes in part to a male preference for the newly available cars and motorcycles, many men lured from the world of the horse just as women were being drawn to it.¹⁷² Regardless of the explanation, the general increase in female riders enabled the emergence of a hunting field split roughly 50–50 in terms of gender. From the 1950s women would make up roughly half the hunting field and they were also quietly assuming a more active role in the management of hunts. In the 1977–78 season Thomas found 69 female MFHs, in the 1981–82 season, 77.¹⁷³ Ulrica Murray Smith, known as ‘Madam’ in the field, held the second longest mastership of the Quorn (1959–80); Di Hellyer served as joint master of the Cottesmore, 1976–81; Rosemary Samworth took over that role in 1991.¹⁷⁴ Beckford would surely have been rendered speechless by this development.

Middle-class women were not the only incomers: by the early twentieth century the participation of children was actively cultivated. Aristocratic offspring were already routine participants: “‘We are not allowed to hunt more than three times a week,’” said one of the children of the eighth Duke of Beaufort, “‘till we are five years old.’”¹⁷⁵ Slightly lower down the social scale Deborah Mitford was allowed to hunt alone from the age of 12.¹⁷⁶ But there was clearly concern that both riding and hunting might become a minority pursuit or disappear entirely in the age of the motor car. Muriel Wace, author of an instruction manual titled *The Young Rider*, first published in 1928 under the pseudonym of ‘Golden Gorse’, wrote in the original preface that while ‘[n]owadays everyone knows about gears and throttles and brakes’, knowledge of the horse was in danger of becoming a ‘sealed book’.¹⁷⁷ When, a year later, the Pony Club was founded to help children develop their riding

Frances Michael. Clayton, *Foxhunting in Paradise*, p. 89; *Endangered Species*, pp. 22, 125; *The Duke of Rutland’s Hounds*, p. 199.

¹⁷² On girls and horses in the twentieth century see Susanna Forrest, *If Wishes were Horses: A Memoir of Equine Obsession* (London, 2012). By the time Forrest took up riding in the late 1970s most of the pupils at riding schools were girls and they were taught by women: ‘In ten years of riding lessons I never shared the ring with a boy’ (p. 12). It has been argued (by men) that this attraction is sexual or psycho-sexual, enabled by the new fashion of riding astride. If, as Forrest comments, ‘there is a basic sexual root to girls’ love of horses, it comes garnished and obscured by male fantasies ...’ (p. 205).

¹⁷³ Thomas, p. 53.

¹⁷⁴ Clayton, *Foxhunting in Paradise*, p. 237.

¹⁷⁵ Dale, *Eighth Duke of Beaufort*, quoted in Ridley, p. 79.

¹⁷⁶ Devonshire, p. 12.

¹⁷⁷ [Wace], *The Young Rider*, p. v. On Wace (b. 1881) see Forrest, pp. 118–19. She and her four sisters rode astride in divided skirts.

skills, assistance came primarily from the hunting fraternity. In the preface to the 1935 edition of her book Wace was able to report with satisfaction that ‘five children seem to be learning to ride to-day for one who was learning seven years ago’.¹⁷⁸ She expected her young riders to hunt as a matter of course and explicitly addressed class issues in this regard, once again stressing the community of the field:

Watch that old country labourer standing on the edge of the big woodland in which hounds are running ... The joy of the hunt is in him as in you. He may wish he had a mount, but he does not grudge you yours. You and he will be closer to one another for your day’s hunting shared – and there will be a bond of sympathy between you which nothing else will give.¹⁷⁹

The days of the horse were not over, as Wace and others had feared; they were merely changing. Recreational riding was becoming the order of the day, and into the middle of the twentieth century fox hunting was central to such pursuits. In 1952 *The Times* commented favourably on the contribution of pony clubs towards sending young people into the hunting field; it also noted that there were more girls than boys in that entry and in particular pointed to the number of farmers’ daughters.¹⁸⁰ In 1960 the same paper happily reported on the flourishing state of hunting, again praising the efforts of the pony club, which not only taught children how to ride but instilled in them ‘the principles of fox-hunting’.¹⁸¹ At the turn of the twenty-first century New Labour’s committee of enquiry into hunting with dogs reported that most hunts continued to run pony clubs which taught children to ride, that such clubs had their origins in hunting and that most branches were named after a local hunt.¹⁸² In the first half of the twentieth century fox-hunting children, like any initiates, were routinely ‘blooded’, dabbed on the face with the fox’s blood when they completed their first hunt. This practice became less common after the Second World War and was ‘quietly dropped’ in the 1990s, when fox hunting came under sustained attack.¹⁸³ In the post-ban period, however, the Countryside Alliance has urged that children be taught about hunting as an aspect of rural life.¹⁸⁴

¹⁷⁸ Ibid., p. vi.

¹⁷⁹ Ibid., p. 156.

¹⁸⁰ ‘Fox-hunting up to date—I–Farmers and field sport since the war’, *The Times*, 7 March 1952.

¹⁸¹ ‘Flourishing state of fox-hunting’, *The Times*, 19 November 1960. The new world of horsey children – horsey little girls in particular – was gently mocked by John Betjeman in a poem titled ‘Hunter Trials’ (1954).

¹⁸² *Report of the Committee of Inquiry into Hunting with Dogs in England and Wales*, 15 June 2000, commonly known as the *Burns Report*, p. 72.

¹⁸³ Clayton, *Endangered Species*, p. 37.

¹⁸⁴ ‘Countryside Alliance calls for children to be taught about blood sports’, *The Telegraph*, 16 May 2009. On the Alliance – successor to the BFSS – see below.

The Late Twentieth Century

Immediately prior to the Second World War, in the 1938–39 season, there were 189 packs of foxhounds hunting in England and Wales; in the post-war recovery period this figure increased, *Baily's Directory* listing 197 such packs in the 1949–50 season.¹⁸⁵ In the 1950s some 20,000 people were hunting; by 1974 the figure had reached 50,000.¹⁸⁶ In 1983 Richard Thomas reported that 'over 50,000 people' hunted at least once during the season: 'A third of hunts have over 100 horses out at the major meets and a handful have over 200; only 10 per cent have under 50. On typical Saturdays over half the hunts have between 50–100 horses out'.¹⁸⁷

What sort of people now comprised the field? Fox hunters continued to promote the democracy argument and to enumerate their varied occupations. The 1990s Cottesmore field, for example, was described by Michael Clayton as 'a remarkable cross-section of society' rather than a group of 'feudal squires' or 'arrogant aristocrats': led by a female Master it included 'farmers, housewives, a roofing contractor, a pawnbroker from Essex, a jeweller, a large-scale motor trader, a solicitor, a lady doctor, a horse dealer, [and] a journalist'.¹⁸⁸ Fox hunting, he claims, is 'far less elitist than many British clubs and organisations with carefully vetted and controlled memberships'.¹⁸⁹

It is equally true, however, that the institutions which supported and defended the sport in the twentieth century continued to reflect older social traditions. The development of the BFSS was not only dominated by aristocrats but depended heavily on retired military officers as well. Investigating its membership Richard Thomas found that

in 1955, seven of the nine members of the General Purposes Committee had a military rank and so have all of its Secretaries (Directors) who have been appointed since the war, the last two being retired Generals. Four of the eight senior staff at Headquarters in 1982 retained a military rank and of the twelve Regional Secretaries in 1977, nine were retired officers.¹⁹⁰

Thomas's analysis of the 'education and career profiles' of masters of foxhounds in the 1970s likewise reflected 'a rather narrow socio-economic section of society'. Sixty-five per cent said that they had attended a public school, slightly half of them had 'some third-level education'; 40 per cent had attended university and over 40 per cent possessed some form of professional training. A third were farmers and another third combined farming with some other

¹⁸⁵ Clayton, *Endangered Species*, p. 44.

¹⁸⁶ Ridley, p. 175; Carr, p. 242.

¹⁸⁷ Thomas, p. 54.

¹⁸⁸ Clayton, *Foxhunting in Paradise*, pp. 243–4.

¹⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 112.

¹⁹⁰ Thomas, p. 138.

career. Almost a third had ‘experienced a significant amount of military service.’¹⁹¹ Forty-five per cent belonged to the Conservative Party.¹⁹² In the 1990s new alliances of wealthy landowners were formed to fight for the continuation of fox hunting. Sir David Steel’s Countryside Movement, founded in 1995 – it would subsequently amalgamate with the British Field Sports Society and American-born Eric Bettelheim’s Countryside Business Group to become the Countryside Alliance – was backed by Lord Peel, a descendent of the famous huntsman and an office-holder in the Prince of Wales’s Duchy of Cornwall, and the Duke of Westminster, one of the wealthiest men in England.¹⁹³ Leadership of the Countryside Alliance was assumed in 2012 by Lieutenant General Sir Barnabas White-Spunner KCB CBE (Rtd), precisely the type of person to act as a red flag to an anti-hunting bull.¹⁹⁴

Fox hunting on many levels remains an Establishment sport if not strictly an aristocratic one and in 1981 Prince Charles attracted derision for telling the MFHA that he had ‘met more ordinary blokes through hunting than anywhere else’.¹⁹⁵ As Emma Griffin commented wryly, ‘his assessment surely tells us more about the rarefied social circles in which he customarily moved than the openness of hunting in the Shires in the 1980s’.¹⁹⁶ It is also a moneyed sport, as it always has been. In the 1980s, an annual subscription in Leicestershire would typically cost nearly £1,000 per day hunted per week; purchase of a hunter set you back £4,500–6,000, with a further £3,000 per year required for its keep. Provincial packs were less expensive, with annual subscriptions in the £400–800 range in Yorkshire and even lower elsewhere. Regardless of economies, ‘the number of people riding to hounds remained small’, and ‘the followers of most packs enjoyed a high standard of living and a large disposable income’.¹⁹⁷

Admittedly, the sources of the necessary income have diversified and in the post-Second World War period class boundaries became blurred. If landed wealth continued to pour money into hunting’s lobbying associations,¹⁹⁸ by the twenty-first century two of the sport’s most outspoken defenders hailed from unlikely social backgrounds. Conservative philosopher Roger Scruton’s origins are thoroughly working class. Otis Ferry, who gained notoriety in September 2004 as one of the hunt protesters who stormed the House of Commons, is an even more marked

¹⁹¹ Ibid., pp. 157–8.

¹⁹² Ibid., p. 159.

¹⁹³ ‘Hunting supporters bite back’, *The Independent*, 12 November 1995; “‘Secret’ pro-hunt group to go public”, *The Independent*, 16 November 1995; Griffin, pp. 224–5.

¹⁹⁴ See ‘Sir Barney White-Spunner on his Countryside Alliance Role’, *The Telegraph*, 20 February 2012.

¹⁹⁵ Clayton, *Endangered Species*, p. 199.

¹⁹⁶ Griffin, p. 207.

¹⁹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁹⁸ The Duke of Westminster loaned the Countryside Movement £1 million, a loan which was never repaid. See Griffin, p. 224.

case in point: grandson of a Durham miner, son of rock star Bryan Ferry, dropout of Marlborough and joint master of foxhounds with the South Shropshire hunt. As one commentator noted sarcastically, ‘who says there is no social mobility in Britain?’¹⁹⁹

Conclusion: ‘Outsiders in the Field’?

David Itzkowitz’s study of fox hunting, which covers the period 1753–1885 (from Meynell, that is, to the late-nineteenth-century agricultural depression), opens cheerfully: ‘Few things seem more English or more aristocratic than foxhunting’.²⁰⁰ In his conclusion, he also comments that nineteenth-century supporters of the hunt ‘never quite resolved the conflict between the image of hunting as a sport of gentlemen and a sport open to all people ... The problem was compounded by the fact that the duality existed’.²⁰¹ In the nineteenth century the dual characterisation of fox hunting as both elitist and democratic was in no way a problem; in fact, the aristocratic connection was a positive lure, one of the main attractions of fox hunting. Snobbery permeates nineteenth-century hunting literature. Nimrod wrote comically about ‘a fox-hunting tailor’ but ‘worshipped nothing but the aristocracy’;²⁰² Hieover, as we have seen, was no better. The Reverend Charles Kingsley’s 1858 description of the democracy of the field, if genuinely affectionate, is also patronising:

That huntsman I have known for fifteen years, and sat many an hour beside his father’s death-bed. I am godfather to that whip’s child. I have seen the servants of the hunt, as I have the hounds, grow up round me for two generations, and I feel for them as old friends – and like to look into their brave, honest, weather-beaten faces. That red coat there, I knew him when he was a schoolboy; and now he is a captain in the Guards, and won his Victoria Cross at Inkermann: that bright green coat is the best farmer, as well as the hardest rider, for many a mile round; one who plays, as he works, with all his might, and might have been a *beau sabreur* and colonel of dragoons. So might that black coat, who now brews good beer, and stands up for the poor at the Board of Guardians, and rides, like the green coat, as well as he works. That other black coat is a county banker; but he knows more of the fox than the fox knows of himself, and where the hounds are, there will he be this day. That red coat has hunted kangaroo Australia: that

¹⁹⁹ Jim White, ‘No thanks, Otis. I’ll stick with the Soho pack’, *The Telegraph*, 20 September 2004. Scruton and Ferry’s defences of hunting are discussed in Chapter 6 below.

²⁰⁰ Itzkowitz, p. 1.

²⁰¹ *Ibid.*, p. 29.

²⁰² ‘A Fox Hunting Tailor’, repr. from the *New Sporting Magazine* in *The Times*, 11 December 1833; Dale, p. 16.

one, as clever and good as he is brave and simple, has stood by Napier's side in many an Indian fight: that one won his Victoria at Delhi, and was cut up at Lucknow, with more than twenty wounds: that one has – but what matter to you who each man is? Enough that each one can tell one a good story, welcome one cheerfully, and give one out here, in the wild forest, the wholesome feeling of being at home among friends.²⁰³

Even a propagandist such as Trollope conceded that democratic participation in fox hunting did not extend to the lowest levels of nineteenth-century society, to 'rustic labourers' or 'any body of men who are paid by wages'.²⁰⁴ More importantly, the social classes who did come together in the nineteenth-century field did not meet as equals. T.H. Dale believed one of the chief virtues of fox hunting was its potential for disseminating aristocratic influence through the lower social orders. The social politics of the nineteenth century remained to a large degree a politics of deference. The fact that fox hunting sustained and promoted conservative, hierarchical social relations is in all likelihood one of the reasons, if unacknowledged at the time, that this particular blood sport did not, like those engaged in solely by the lower classes, come under political attack. Social politics, however, changed markedly in the twentieth century.

Once a politics of deference and condescension fell out of favour, on a strictly public relations front it became increasingly imperative that the democracy of fox hunting, rather than its aristocratic associations, be emphasised. It is certainly true that real change occurred over the centuries. 'Throughout the 1980s', Emma Griffin argues, 'most packs hunted along traditional lines and the sport had changed remarkably little since the nineteenth century'. Yet in the very next sentence she continues, 'By now fully half the membership of most packs was female and most hunts were hunting over a landscape that was modernised, in parts at least, beyond all recognition'.²⁰⁵ What, then, constitutes 'tradition'? From the early nineteenth century the history of fox hunting has been marked, as Itzkowitz said, by the 'increasing presence of outsiders in the field', its 'original character' long gone.²⁰⁶ In the 1850s Hieover was still championing the aristocratic connections of the sport – 'While Old England stands pre-eminent among nations, so will its aristocracy stand among men' –²⁰⁷ and Dale advanced the same argument in 1899. But, despite high-profile exceptions such as the dukes of Beaufort, the aristocratic presence in the field has substantially diminished over time. Squires too have retreated, and farmers – now owner-occupiers rather than the tenant variety –

²⁰³ Charles Kingsley, 'My Winter Garden', *Fraser's Magazine*, 57 (April 1858): p. 415. The references to brewers and bankers echo that made by Serjeant Shepherd in *Essex v. Capel* (1809); see above, p. 16.

²⁰⁴ Trollope, 'On Hunting', p. 75.

²⁰⁵ Griffin, p. 208. For landscape, see Chapter 6 below.

²⁰⁶ Itzkowitz, p. 178.

²⁰⁷ Hieover, *The Hunting-Field*, p. 15.

and townspeople advanced. Clergymen vanished. Women joined, and eventually assumed masterships as well as male dress. Children became a fixture.

Fox hunting, as its historians have repeatedly pointed out, continually adapted to survive.²⁰⁸ In the nineteenth century widening of the social composition of the field was crucial to the economic survival of the sport; from the second half of the twentieth century democracy and openness had increasingly to be insisted on to prevent it from being condemned as an elitist activity. By the twenty-first century, even race would be invoked, albeit feebly, in this regard. In June 2004 the Countryside Alliance ran a poster campaign showing a nurse, Sarah Bell, in her hunting gear and in her nurse's uniform. The caption read, 'Now you hate her... now you don't'. In November, they followed it up with another which featured a mixed race female fox hunter. The caption? 'Prejudice ...Tell me about it'. Sarah Lake, born in Slough to an Afro-Caribbean father and English mother, was a 30-year-old restaurant manager married to a farmer and living in west Wales; she and her nine-year-old daughter hunted with the South Pembrokeshire; her sister Michelle hunted with the Beaufort. Lake, reported the *Telegraph*, was 'far removed' from the traditional image of hunting.²⁰⁹

Unfortunately for fox hunters such campaigning had little effect, and despite the genuine broadening of the hunting field the aristocratic associations persisted in public memory and enhanced opposition to the sport. In the nineteenth century 'N's accusation of 'tyranny' had no purchase as the middle classes eagerly joined in the chase; by the late twentieth century the perception of fox hunting as an elitist activity had become a severe handicap. Aristocratic associations – and indeed the association of hunting with royalty – continued to be cherished and highlighted in at least some of the twentieth-century hunt literature. Country Life Books' reissue in 1984, for example, of a nineteenth-century hunting novel contains a foreword by the Prince of Wales.²¹⁰ Prince Charles, wrote the editor of *Horse & Hound* magazine in the mid-1980s, was 'rightly held in such high esteem that many a non-committed Briton is inclined to think that if [he] is a keen hunting man then there must be more to the sport than is indicated by the vapourings of the anti-hunting lobby'.²¹¹ Twenty-three years later Emma Griffin similarly commented

²⁰⁸ Carr, pp. 19, 241–2; see also Itzkowitz, pp. 19–21.

²⁰⁹ The Countryside Alliance did admit that black members of the hunt were not 'ordinary'. Rarer still than Lake was Derek Laud, a black 'homosexual venture capitalist' elected joint master of the New Forest Foxhounds in 2000. 'Black woman is new face of the hunt', *The Telegraph*, 22 November 2004.

²¹⁰ G.J. Whyte-Melville, *Market Harborough* (1861; Feltham, Middlesex, 1984), pp. vii–viii (Prince Charles acknowledged [p. vii] that he had never read any of Whyte-Melville's novels until asked for his assistance). In the same decade Lord Paget of Northampton, QC provided the foreword for Buxton's *Ladies of the Chase* and the first person to be thanked in her acknowledgements is Her Majesty the Queen. Buxton, pp. 7–8, 11.

²¹¹ Introduction, Whyte-Melville, *Market Harborough*, p. xi.

that ‘with patronage from such quarters, hunting’s place in English society had appeared infallible’.²¹² But times change: Griffin also noted that the Prince’s 2004 declaration to the effect that if the Labour government succeeded in banning fox hunting ‘he might as well leave the country and spend the rest of [his] life skiing’ mobilised the support of Old Labour for just such a ban ‘more effectively than any government whip’.²¹³

²¹² Griffin, p. 2. In Griffin’s view fox hunting did not become ‘the socially inclusive sport that it had always claimed to be’ until the late twentieth century, by which time car, bicycle and foot followers had joined the mounted field (p. 189). See also pp. 217–18.

²¹³ *The Guardian*, 6 November 2004; Griffin, p. 2.

This page has been left blank intentionally

Chapter 3

‘The Cricket of Savages’?: Class and Cruelty

The savage in his natural state hunts, as the animals hunt, to support his life; the sense of sport is strongest in the elaborately educated and civilized. It may be that the taste will die out before ‘Progress’.

James Froude, ‘Cheneys and the House of Russell’,
Short Studies on Great Subjects (1867), vol. 4, p. 350

Introduction

In the attack on fox hunting as barbarous and inhumane made by the anonymous reviewer of *Thoughts on Hunting*, the fox himself barely figures. ‘N’ instead spends much of his time reproducing and attacking Beckford’s advice regarding the disciplining of hounds. Scathing criticism is also made of the cited practice of entering young hounds first at a cat dragged along the ground, and then at a badger (after breaking its teeth), and to Beckford’s instructions on ensuring that hares are given a good run rather than killed swiftly.¹

That the chief animal welfare concerns raised by Beckford’s critic did not centre on the welfare of the fox is unsurprising. Few in the late eighteenth century sympathised with the plight of an animal universally recognised as a callous hunter himself, and until the last quarter of the nineteenth century most of the English continued to believe that, as William Somervile had asserted in *The Chace* (1735), hunting was ‘the image of war, without its guilt’. In Somervile’s famous poem the fox is firmly identified as undeserving of mercy, ‘a subtle, pilf’ring foe’: ‘Oh! How glorious ’tis/To right th’ oppress’d, and bring the felon vile/To just disgrace!’ His last moments are related without remorse. Nearing his own end

he creeps along; his brush he drags,
And sweeps the mire impure; from his wide jaws
His tongue unmoisten’d hangs; symptoms too sure
of sudden death ...’

Still he flies before what remains of the field, but he cannot escape and is at last dragged trembling from a hen coop. Hounds then

... on his blood
With greedy transport feast. In bolder notes
Each sounding horn proclaims the felon dead;

¹ Art. VI, ‘Thoughts on Hunting’, *Monthly Review* (September 1781): p. 220.

And all th' assembled village shouts for joy.
 The farmer who beholds his mortal foe
 Stretch'd at his feet, applauds the glorious deed ...

Some fifty years later Francis Mundy expressed the same sentiment: 'Talk not of pity to such foes!/Stern justice claims the life he owes'.²

The Romantic poets who followed tended to be more squeamish. William Cowper (1731–1800), for example, was shaken by witnessing a huntsman throw the body of a fox to the hounds which had successfully pursued it, 'screaming like a fiend, "Tear him to pieces!"'³ But even the Romantics reserved their sympathy primarily for the hare and the stag.⁴ In the mid-nineteenth century 'Harry Hieover' was still arguing that 'our vulpine war brings no sigh of regret to any one, but adds health, vigour, high spirits, and good fellowship to all who partake in it, and is, moreover, one of the few pursuits and pleasures of this life that "leaves no sting behind." Hail, then, thou mimic field of war!' ⁵ Hieover did demonstrate an aversion to hunting hares: 'I am not of a particularly sensitive turn, but the plaintive "wheel" of a dying hare grates on my nerves ... I cannot but feel, in hare-hunting, I am pursuing an animal that has no means of defence against its destroyer'. The fox, however, was different: he 'dies a game, a fighting foe. I admire his courage, yet hold his death as the ordinary fate of warfare'.⁶ Into the 1860s, where cruelty issues were raised in connection with fox hunting they related primarily to the suffering of horses and hounds. The blood in blood sport was otherwise a given. 'The reader must understand', wrote Trollope, 'that to kill his fox is the grand object of the Master; it is the grand object also of the huntsman, of his assistants, and of the hounds. Unless this be done with fair average frequency, the hounds

² Mundy, *Needwood Forest* (1776), p. 36, quoted in Keith Thomas, *Man and the Natural World: Changing Attitudes in England 1500–1800* (London, 1984), p. 163. Thomas's remarkable book remains the best account of changing attitudes towards the animal kingdom between 1500 and 1800. See esp. Chapters 3 and 4; on fox hunting specifically, pp. 163–5; on class and cruelty, pp. 182–7.

³ William Cowper, *Selected Letters*, p. 270, quoted in Thomas, *Man and the Natural World*, p. 146.

⁴ On the Romantics and hunting see David Perkins, 'Cowper's Hares', *Eighteenth-Century Life*, 20 n.s. 2 (1996): pp. 57–69 and 'Wordsworth and the Polemic against Hunting: "Hart-Leap Well"', *Nineteenth-Century Literature*, 52/4 (March 1998): pp. 421–45. See also 'Compassion for Animals and Radical Politics: Coleridge's "To a Young Ass"', *ELH*, 65/4 (1998): pp. 929–44.

⁵ Harry Hieover, *The Hunting-Field*, 2nd ed. (London, 1859), p. 2. Rowland Egerton Warburton too echoed Somerville in his *Hunting Songs* (London, 1856): 'Lancers in battle with lances may tilt/Mine be the warfare unsullied with guilt!' 'On the New Kennel, Erected on Delamere Forest. May 1834'.

⁶ Hieover, *The Hunting-Field*, p. 184.

will become useless, the farmers discontented, the old women furious, and hunting would, in fact, be impracticable. The hunted fox should, if possible, be killed'.⁷

Early Critics: The Clergy and the Fox

Even in the early days of the sport, when most people thought the fox fair game, a few isolated protests can be identified. Biblical authority had for centuries been cited as sanctioning man's right to use the animal kingdom as he chose,⁸ and as we saw in the previous chapter, from the late eighteenth century into the late nineteenth the clergy were enthusiastic members of the field. In his *Natural History of Selborne* (1789), the Reverend Gilbert White (1720–1793) commented on man's predilection for blood sport: 'most men are sportsmen by constitution; and there is such an inherent spirit for hunting in human nature, as scarce any inhibitions can restrain'; it is 'impossible' to 'extinguish the spirit of sporting, which seems to be inherent in human nature'.⁹ White's equally well-known contemporary, Parson Woodforde (1740–1803), despite a demonstrated compassion for the various animals in his care, was likewise a sportsman and loved to course hares,¹⁰ while as late as 1858 the Reverend Charles Kingsley (1819–1875), a keen fox hunter, did not shy away from the desired conclusion of the hunt. Kingsley compared the music of hounds to

a whole opera of *Der Freischutz* – demonic element and all – to judge by those red lips, fierce eyes, wild hungry voices; and such as should make Reinecke, had he strong aesthetic sympathies, well content to be hunted from his cradle to his grave, that such sweet sounds might by him enrich the air ...

⁷ 'On Hunting', *British Sports and Pastimes, 1868* (London, 1868), p. 111.

⁸ See Thomas, *Man and the Natural World*, Chapter 3.

⁹ Gilbert White, *The Natural History of Selborne* (London, 2003), pp. 28, 34.

¹⁰ In his diaries, for example, Woodforde recorded operating with a penknife on an injured cat, stitching up the half-inch wound, and applying Friars Balsam: 'It grieved me much to see the poor creature in such pain ...' James Woodforde, *The Diary of a Country Parson* (London, 1926), vol. 1 (1758–1781), p. 81. He hanged one of his hounds 'directly out of her Misery' when she came home shot beyond repair (*ibid.*, p. 211) and grieved for days over the unexpected loss of one of his horses: 'am very sorry for him as he was so good natured a Beast ... The death of my poor good natured Horse (by name Jack) made me very uneasy all the day long ... Fretting and vexing about my Horse made me much out of order to-day – quite low (vol. 1, p. 290). Coursing hares with his greyhounds, however, was a favourite relaxation and there is no discussion of any potential cruelty in the pastime. See *ibid.*, pp. 33, 78–9, 220, 303, 330, 333 and 340. He also had his good-natured horse skinned and shared the profits with his servants.

For as the Etruscans (says Athenaeus) were so luxurious that they used to flog their slaves to the sound of the flute, so shall luxurious Chanter and Challenger, Sweetlips and Melody, eat thee to the sound of rich organ-pipes, so that thou mayest,

Like that old fabled swan, in music die.¹¹

Paradoxically, many of the earliest critics of fox hunting, and of blood sports more generally, were also clergymen. The Reverend Humphry Primatt (bap. 1735; d. 1776/7) published one of the first books on the issue. In *A Dissertation on the Duty of Mercy and the Sin of Cruelty to Brute Animals* (1776) he argued, ‘pain is pain, whether it is inflicted on man or on beast; and the creature that suffers it, whether man or beast, being sensible of the misery of it while it lasts, suffers evil’, thus anticipating Jeremy Bentham’s argument: ‘The question is not can they *reason*? Nor, can they *talk*? But can they *suffer*?’¹² The *Dissertation* proved to be Primatt’s sole publication but it was not without influence. A Dorset clergyman named John Toogood attached a summary of it to a published sermon, three editions of which had appeared in Britain by 1790,¹³ and an edited version of Primatt’s text was reprinted in 1822 by another clergyman, Arthur Broome (1779–1837), founder of the Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals.¹⁴

Primatt deliberately avoided specifying or singling out types of cruelty, asserting instead the general principle that cruelty to animals was wrong. But there is a clear implication in the text that he condemned hunting for sport: ‘whilst [an animal] lives, he has a right to happiness, at least I have no right to make him miserable; and, when I kill him, I ought to dispatch him suddenly, and with the least degree of pain’.¹⁵ Some twenty pages on he wrote,

I am aware of the obloquy to which every man must expose himself, who presumes to encounter *Prejudice* and long received *Customs*. To make a *comparison* between a Man and a Brute, is *abominable*: To talk of a man’s *Duty* to his Horse or his Ox, is *absurd*; To suppose it a *Sin* to chase a Stag, to hunt a Fox, or course a Hare, is *unpolite*; To esteem it *barbarous* to throw at a Cock, to bait a Bull, to roast a Lobster, or to crimp a Fish, is *ridiculous*. Reflections of this kind must be expected; though I have avoided as much as I could the pointing out of any particular instances of cruelty; for I had rather the Proposition should be

¹¹ Charles Kingsley, ‘My Winter Garden’, *Fraser’s Magazine*, 57 (April 1858): p. 415.

¹² Humphry Primatt, *A Dissertation on the Duty of Mercy and the Sin of Cruelty to Brute Animals* (London, 1776), pp. 7–8.

¹³ An American edition was published in 1802 while in England further editions still were published in 1822, 1831, 1834 and, more recently, in 1992. See Primatt’s entry in the *ODNB*.

¹⁴ For Broome see the *ODNB*. The SPCA is discussed below.

¹⁵ Primatt, p. 54.

general, that Cruelty in any shape is foolish and detestable. But if it is applicable to any of the abovementioned particulars, I have no objection to the inference. And I will not deny that I had these, and many more than these, in view.¹⁶

In *An Essay on Humanity to Animals* (1798) Thomas Young (1772–1835) castigated the clergy for their participation in blood sports:

Humanity, sensibility, and gentleness, are traits which ought always to be found in the character of a clergyman: his amusements should all be of the sober kind; not violent and boistrous, not rough and inelegant. How disgusting, then, how scandalizing to his parishioners, to see him ranging the fields, and bursting over hedges ... How much more so, to see him joining in the fury and clamour of the chace, perhaps disguised in the habiliments of a jockey, and with the brush depending from his cap, the trophy of some former field!¹⁷

Young then cited from Cowper's 'Progress of Error' (1781):

Oh, laugh or mourn with me the rueful jest,
A cassock'd huntsman! ...
He takes the field. The master of the pack
Cries – Well done, saint! – and claps him on
The back.
Is this the path of sanctity? Is this
To stand a way-mark in the road to bliss?

The Reverend Henry Crowe (1769–1851), vicar of Buckingham, agreed. In *Zoophilos* (1819) he turned to field sports immediately after an introduction to his subject, and before chapters on labouring and domestic animals, cruelty inflicted in butchering animals for food and cruelty in the name of science. In a footnote in the introduction, after reminding his readers of the various forms of physical pain to which human beings might find themselves subjected as the result of illness, accident or battle, he wrote that they might have some

idea of the miseries caused to the objects of sport in field diversions. They might then judge a little of the feelings of a hare, fox, or stag, during a chace,

¹⁶ Ibid., pp. 75–6. In 1799 the Reverend Henry Brindley of Lacock, Wiltshire, made provision for an annual lecture (which usually took place on the Sunday before Shrove Tuesday) to be preached on 'The Sin of Cruelty towards the Brute Creation', with the officiating clergyman paid three guineas.

¹⁷ Thomas Young, *An Essay on Humanity to Animals* (London, 1798), pp. 81–3. This essay received a positive notice in the *Monthly Review*, 25 (April 1798): pp. 467–8.

which must, no doubt, much resemble those in themselves, if they were pursued, seized, and devoured by fifty ravening, open-mouthed, howling wolves ...¹⁸

Chapter 2 opened, ‘I begin with Field Diversions, as a species of cruelty much sanctioned by custom, but which I esteem one of the most reprehensible’.¹⁹ Crowe turned first to consideration of the character of the sportsman – a consideration in which, although he stops short of invoking ‘tyranny’, class certainly features.

There are, in almost every civilized country with which we are acquainted, a numerous class of men, raised above the lower ranks by possessing, in general, leisure, fortune, and advantages of education, whose amusement is derived – I do not say from a pleasure in causing misery to other animals, but from pursuits on which such misery is necessarily and inseparably attendant ... It will hardly be denied, however palliated, by any one of them, that his diversion consists in persecuting, terrifying, wounding, torturing, and killing these animals ... I must add that in my judgment the diversions are, morally considered, wholly indefensible.²⁰

He then qualified his criticism somewhat:

I by no means class every sportsman among the unfeeling, the depraved, or the unprincipled. On the contrary, I have known, and still know, many men possessing true principles of benevolence and moral obligation, who join, and with keenness, in the sports of the field. Yet I must be allowed to say, that this is done during the slumber of reason, and that on these occasions they disregard or suppress those feelings which mature reflection would excite. This effect is, I suspect, usually produced by the eagerness of the chase, the animating scene of hounds and horn, and the presence of cheerful, gay society ... But when these emotions are past, let them ask themselves calmly, whether such diversion be in a moral light justifiable, or will bear the test of serious and unprejudiced retrospect?²¹

Crowe also pointed out the ‘great inconsistency’ inherent in the animal-loving sportsman, singling out the Scottish poet James Thomson in this regard:

In his AUTUMN, he first professes great benevolence to all animals, and is lavish in his abuse of shooting, and hare or stag hunting. Yet he proceeds to say that hunting the lion, wolf, or boar, lie not under the same charge of cruelty, they

¹⁸ Henry Crowe, *Zoophilos; or, Considerations on the Moral Treatment of Inferior Animals*, 2nd ed. (London, 1820), p. 11n.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 16.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 16–17.

²¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 17–18.

being noxious animals; nor fox-hunting, for the same reason. Herein he urges us to 'give our sportive fury pitiless!' – the fox being a 'nightly robber of the fold.' This justification is not a little ludicrous. I beg to ask, what reception would anyone meet, who should present himself before a company of fox-hunters, and inform them, that he had been destroying half a dozen litters of this rapacious and abhorred vermin? Would they express their thanks for his kind zeal and activity in assisting their labours? Or would they not, more probably, remunerate his services with a horse-whipping?²²

Thomson, he suspected, had 'not a little encouraged' a love of fox hunting.²³

John Lawrence and the Rights of Animals

Humphry Primatt was unique not merely in being among the first authors to mount a sustained attack on cruelty to animals but in including, even if implicitly, fox hunting in his catalogue of cruelties. In 1796 John Lawrence (1753–1839), an agricultural writer, published the first volume of an equally groundbreaking work, *A Philosophical and Practical Treatise on Horses*. Although Primatt had stated explicitly that an animal has a 'right' to happiness, and man no right to interfere with that happiness, he argued primarily from Scripture: roughly two-thirds of his 326-page text consists of Biblical evidence in support of his proposition. Lawrence, by contrast, writing in the 1790s, had absorbed the new rights-based ideology. A few years earlier he had defended (anonymously), the principles of the French Revolution and in Chapter 3 of the first volume of *Philosophical and Practical Treatise*, 'The rights of beasts', he extends rights discourse to the animal world:

No human government, I believe, has ever recognized the *jus animalium*, which surely ought to form part of the jurisprudence of every system, founded on the principles of justice and humanity ... Experience plainly demonstrates the inefficacy of mere morality to prevent aggression, and the necessity of coercive laws for the security of rights. I therefore propose, that the Rights of Beasts should be formally acknowledged by the state, and that a law be framed upon that principle, to guard and protect them from acts of flagrant and wanton cruelty, whether committed by their owners or others.²⁴

'Unless you make legal and formal recognition of the Rights of Beasts', he continued, 'you cannot punish cruelty and aggression, without trespassing upon

²² Ibid., pp. 29–30.

²³ Ibid., p. 29.

²⁴ John Lawrence, *A Philosophical and Practical Treatise on Horses, and on the Moral Duties of Man towards the Brute Creation* (2 vols, London, 1796–8), vol. 1, p. 123.

right of property’.²⁵ Legal recognition of the rights of animals would ‘effectually sweep away all those hellish nuisances, miscalled sports’.²⁶

Fox hunting, however, unlike baiting animals or throwing at cocks, did not fall within Lawrence’s definition of ‘hellish’ sports. ‘No true and lawful, that is to say, rational, useful, and delightful sports’, he argued, ‘would be interrupted by [his regulation], but rather confirmed, illustrated, and improved’.²⁷ In the second volume of his treatise he explicitly exempts fox hunting from any charge of cruelty:

HUNTING THE FOX, which is a beast of prey, greedy of blood, a robber prowling about, seeking what creature he may devour, is not liable to a single one of the preceding objections; nor indeed to any one, in a moral view, with which I am acquainted. He is a fair object of sport, who sports with the feelings of all other creatures subjected to his powers; and a fierce and pugnacious animal can be liable to none of those horrors, either in his pursuit, or capture, which must inevitably agonize the feelings of the timid.²⁸

Lawrence had read ‘N’s review of *Thoughts on Hunting* and similarly condemned setting hounds on the domestic cat and the savage discipline to which hounds were subjected, as well as the ‘greatest abuse in hunting ... that horrid one of riding horses to death in long chaces’.²⁹ But he also waxed lyrical for at least two pages on the delights of a fox hunt:

I could never agree with the fastidious disciples of the Chesterfield school, who condemns this noble sport *in toto*, merely because a number of blockheads may chance to be attached to it: I hold it an exercise by no means unbecoming the student or philosopher, who may seek and find health in the pleasing fatigues of the chase, who will feel the sympathetic and musical chords of the soul vibrating to the harmony of the deep-toned pack; who will find ample cause of admiration at the wonderful and various instinctive gifts of nature, in the sagacity and perseverance of the high-bred hound, whilst, borne as it were on the wings of the wind, across the ‘country wide’, scarce conscious of obstacle, by their fleet and staid coursers, they acquire hardihood, a love of enterprise, and contempt of danger.³⁰

²⁵ Ibid., p. 125.

²⁶ Ibid.

²⁷ Ibid.

²⁸ Ibid., vol. 2, pp. 14–15.

²⁹ Ibid., p. 20.

³⁰ Ibid., p. 15. For an equally lyrical account of convivial post-hunt socializing see vol. 2, p. 16.

'Humanity Dick': The Animal-Loving Sportsman

Lawrence, who would later publish books on field sports under the pseudonym of G.H. Scott,³¹ is a prime example of the type identified by Carr as 'the animal-loving sportsman'. Richard Martin, the early nineteenth century's most vociferous spokesman – and ultimately legislator – for animals was very much of the same cast of mind. Like Humphry Primatt who, apart from condemning cruelty to animals, had been among the first to assert that a white man's colour did not entitle him 'to enslave and tyrannise over a black man',³² Martin too was associated with a variety of progressive causes. Born a Catholic Irishman, his parents deliberately brought him up as a Protestant so that he might sit in the House of Commons and work for the cause of Catholic Emancipation. Martin also supported the anti-slavery movement, as well as introducing the first bill to allow those accused of capital offences the right to counsel and joining in the campaign to abolish the death penalty for forgery.³³ The Prince of Wales gave him the nickname, 'Humanity'.³⁴

Martin's interest in animal welfare was first kindled while he was at school, by Samuel Parr (1747–1825). Parr impressed upon his pupils the same message contained in William Hogarth's print series 'The Four Stages of Cruelty' (1751): 'He that can look with rapture upon the agonies of an unoffending and unresisting animal, will soon learn to view the sufferings of a fellow creature with indifference; and in time he will acquire the power of viewing them with triumph, if that fellow-creature should become the victim of his resentment, be it just or unjust'. Children must therefore be brought up to be kind to animals, and this would be impossible 'if the heart has been once familiarized to spectacles of distress, and has been permitted either to behold the pangs of any living creature with cold insensibility, or to inflict them with wanton barbarity'.³⁵ In 1794 Martin inherited a large property in Ireland, together with the right to hold a manorial court. This court he used to impose his advanced views respecting kindness to animals on his tenantry: 'Mercilessly beating and starving animals of all kinds', his biographer writes, 'was usual among people who themselves had little beyond what was necessary for subsistence, and there was no indulgence for sick animals'. Such

³¹ See, e.g., *British Field Sports; embracing practical instructions in shooting – hunting – coursing – racing – cocking – fishing, &c., with observations on the breaking and training of dogs and horses; also, the management of fowling pieces, and all other sporting implements* (London, 1818).

³² Primatt, p. 11.

³³ On Martin see the *ODNB* and Shevawn Lynam, *Humanity Dick: A Biography of Richard Martin, MP, 1754–1834* (London, 1975). For the links between his interest in animal welfare and reform of the criminal law see Randall McGowen, 'Cruel Inflictions and the Claims of Humanity in Early Nineteenth-Century England', in Katherine Watson (ed.), *Assaulting the Past* (Cambridge, 2007), pp. 38–57.

³⁴ Lynam, p. 171.

³⁵ Quoted in Lynam, p. 7.

behaviour now had adverse consequences, tenants being fined or imprisoned (in a little castle on an island in Ballinahinch Lake) for any abuse of the animal kingdom. Asked why he cared so much for the lives of animals Martin replied, ‘Sir, an ox cannot hold a pistol!’ His eccentricity was tolerated as Martin himself had demonstrated considerable skill in such usage in duels.³⁶

Once in Parliament Martin would work with Lawrence to draft a bill to protect domestic animals from abuse, the preamble of which proclaimed that cruel and oppressive treatment of animals ‘is not only highly unjust and immoral, but most pernicious in its example, having an evident tendency to harden the heart against the natural feelings of humanity ...’³⁷ The bill, however, passed the Lords only in modified form so that it applied solely to beasts of burden, and even in its original incarnation wild animals did not come within the law’s remit. Those living in a state of nature, it was believed, would overrun the world if their numbers were not kept down via hunting, and Martin, like Lawrence, was a keen sportsman. The welfare of the fox thus did not figure in his lifelong endeavours to improve man’s treatment of the animal kingdom.

Legislating against Cruel Sports

At the turn of the twenty-first century the Burns Committee would state that animal welfare is ‘essentially concerned with assessing the ability of an animal to cope with its environment: if an animal is having difficulty in coping with its environment, or is failing to cope, then its welfare may be regarded as poor. This judgement is distinct from any ethical or moral judgements about the way in which the animal is being treated’.³⁸ The legislative protection of animals, however, has consistently involved ethical and moral judgments and the history of the animal welfare and animal rights movements are also, like the history of hunting, shot through with class politics.

In Brian Harrison’s overview of the legislative protection of animals, wild animals constitute a fifth and final phase. ‘Up to the 1830s’, he argues, the primary concern was the welfare of horses and cattle: legislation regulating slaughter houses was passed in 1785 and in 1822 Martin had succeeded in legislating against cruelty to cattle.³⁹ Regulation of ‘cruel’ sports proved more difficult, for cruelty was not the only issue. A survey of legislation introduced from the turn of the nineteenth century specifically dealing with blood sports indicates that this early

³⁶ Lynam, pp. 94–5.

³⁷ Quoted *ibid.*, p. 152.

³⁸ *Report of the Committee of Inquiry into Hunting with Dogs in England and Wales*, 15 June 2002, p. 108.

³⁹ Brian Harrison, ‘Animals and the State in Nineteenth-Century England,’ *English Historical Review*, 88 (October 1973): pp. 786–820 at p. 788.

welfare legislation was heavily coloured by class concerns if not by positive class prejudices.

When Parliament first turned its attention to 'blood sports' the initial target was bull baiting. Bills to prohibit the sport were introduced in 1800, 1802 and 1809: all of them failed. William Windham (1750–1810), one of the most robust and articulate opponents of the proposed abolition, made explicit reference to what he saw as a double standard inherent in attempts to legislate against cruelty. That double standard was not his sole concern. Windham did not believe that cruelty to animals was a fit subject for legislation; it should rather be corrected 'by reproof, by discountenance, by example, by admonition ...' 'more by manners than by laws'.⁴⁰ But he also argued that attempting to outlaw bull baiting while allowing fox hunting, shooting and fishing to continue was hypocritical. In 1800 he asked,

if there was no cruelty in hunting? What would the poor, who were already deprived of the liberty of shooting, say to those Gentlemen of fortune who were endeavouring to cut them off from all kinds of amusements? Why that those latter were worse savages than they, that they were not content with having all nature before them, and monopolising to themselves the right of killing game, but that they took delight in tormenting poor timid animals that ran away to save their lives; that they pursued these animals until their horses could scarcely put one foot before another. That that still was not sufficient to satisfy them; but they panted for the honour of being *in at the death*; or in other words, of gratifying their ferocious dispositions by seeing the entrails torn from the animal that had been for so long a victim to their cruelty.⁴¹

Nine years later, when Thomas Erskine (1750–1823), the future lord chancellor, introduced his Cruelty to Animals bill, Windham also drew attention to the fact that in practice, such legislation would result in carters being prosecuted for beating a horse but leave unpunished the squire who rode his hunter to death or beat his dog: squires, after all, were also magistrates. Erskine's bill, Windham argued, 'instead of being called, A Bill for preventing Cruelty to Animals, should be entitled, A Bill for harassing and oppressing certain Classes among the lower Orders of His Majesty's Subjects'.⁴²

What a pretty figure must we make in the world, if in one column of the newspapers we should read a string of instances of men committed under 'the Cruelty Bill', some to the county-gaol to wait for trial at the assizes, some by summary process to the house of correction; and in another part an article of 'Sporting Intelligence', setting forth the exploits of my Lord Such-a-one's

⁴⁰ William Windham, *Speeches in Parliament, of the Right Honourable William Windham* (3 vols, London, 1812), vol. 3, pp. 323, 325.

⁴¹ *The Times*, 19 April 1800.

⁴² Windham, p. 315.

hounds; – how the hounds threw off at such a cover; that bold Reynard went off in a gallant style, &c. and was not killed till after a chace of ten hours; that of fifty horsemen who were out at the beginning not above five were in at the *death*; that three horses *died* in the field, and *several* it was thought would never *recover*; and that upon the whole it was the most glorious day's *sport* ever remembered since the pack was first set up! Is it possible that men could stand the shame of such statements?⁴³

Erskine's bill, introduced and passed in the Lords, failed in the House of Commons, but the double standard identified by Windham was imposed to an even greater extent in subsequent legislation which specifically targeted the blood sports of the lower classes without touching fox hunting.⁴⁴ An act passed in 1835 imposed fines on anyone who kept premises for 'fighting or baiting any bull, bear, badger, dog, cock or other kind of animal, whether of domestic or wild nature'.⁴⁵ Cock fighting had been almost eliminated by the turn of the nineteenth century and in the subsequent 40 years many other blood sports associated with the labouring classes came under sustained attack. In the first half of the nineteenth century Windham was a lone voice crying in the wilderness: Parliament condemned and abolished the blood sports of the lower classes while turning a blind eye to those enjoyed by its own members.

The RSPCA

Not content with passing legislation prohibiting cruelty, the early welfare campaigners were keen to see the 1822 act applied. Richard Martin was tireless in personally investigating and prosecuting instances of cruelty witnessed on London's streets, and the first to bring to court a man charged with cruelty to a horse.⁴⁶ In 1823, the likeminded Arthur Broome hired an inspector to detect and prosecute any abuses at Smithfield's cattle market and in the following year he founded and became secretary of the Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (SPCA), in part to enforce the cruelty legislation but also to educate people with respect to the humane treatment of animals.⁴⁷ Other members of the society included those involved in legislating against cruelty: Martin; the anti-slavery campaigner William Wilberforce (1759–1833) and Thomas Fowell

⁴³ Ibid., vol. 3, p. 321.

⁴⁴ See Robert W. Malcolmson, *Popular Recreations in English Society, 1700–1850* (Cambridge, 1973), esp. Chapter 7.

⁴⁵ *Cruelty to Animals Act 1835*, 5 & 6 Will. IV, c. 59.

⁴⁶ For Martin's legislative campaign see Lynam, Chapter 18; for *The Times*'s report of this original prosecution see 'Cruelty to Animals', 16 January 1821.

⁴⁷ A correspondent to the *Monthly Review* had proposed the formation of such a society in 1818. Lynam, p. 195.

Buxton (1786–1845). Buxton, an MP with an interest in a variety of humanitarian causes, including prison and legal reform, was, like Wilberforce, best known for his part in the anti-slavery campaign. Apart from prosecuting under the existing act and publishing tracts to promote their cause they also pressed for extension of cruelty legislation. Fox hunting, however, did not become one of their targets. Buxton too was a keen sportsman.⁴⁸

Historians of the RSPCA (the 'Royal' prefix was added in 1840) and the early anti-cruelty legislation routinely invoke class in their explanations of why fox hunting was not targeted as cruel. Thus Brian Harrison has argued that in its early years the society 'was quite unashamed in focusing primarily on cruelty committed at the lower end of society, quite explicit in its belief that cruelty was more common there than elsewhere',⁴⁹ while Robert Malcolmson contends that social control, rather than cruelty per se, was the real motivation for legislating against lower class sport. Sports such as bull running, cock or dog fighting, or badger baiting were condemned not merely for the cruelty they involved but for their presumed tendency to undermine social order. They kept the labouring classes from work, encouraging disorderly association and promoting gambling among them: 'the concern for cruelty and its consequences was strongly reinforced by the solicitude for public order and for labour discipline'.⁵⁰ Harrison also points to the urban/rural divide so frequently invoked by the pro-hunt movement in the late twentieth and early twenty-first century. 'In a predominantly rural society', Harrison wrote, 'men are constantly reminded of their dependence on the slaughter of animals, and of the cruelty of animals to each other'.⁵¹ The RSPCA's campaign against cockfighting in particular he describes as 'less a controversy between social classes than between urban and rural styles of life'.⁵² The first two phases of RSPCA activity, which covered the period from the 1820s to 1860, Harrison believes 'constituted urban attacks on rural culture'.⁵³ The society, after all, was originally a London organisation and its first efforts outside the capital 'focused on the spa and seaside towns where rich Londoners spent their holidays'.⁵⁴

While these arguments certainly help to explain public support for the RSPCA they do not, in my opinion, explain the motivation of the proponents of the early cruelty legislation and founders of the society. Broome was not a Londoner. Martin

⁴⁸ Raymond Carr, *English Fox Hunting: A History* (London, 1976), p. 198.

⁴⁹ Harrison, p. 815.

⁵⁰ Malcolmson, p. 138.

⁵¹ Harrison, p. 786.

⁵² *Ibid.*, p. 789.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, p. 790. The third phase, by contrast, 'involved defending the rural environment against urban desecration' and 'subordinating the countryside's food-getting role to its role as provider of recreation for an increasingly urban population'. *Ibid.* The fourth phase, which dated from 1876, focused on 'cruelty committed exclusively by educated people' in the form of vivisection (p. 791).

⁵⁴ Harrison, p. 801.

came from a rural Irish estate and spent his years on that estate prosecuting his tenants for cruelty to farm animals; he was also an active participant in rural sports. These men, I would argue, were predominately moved by genuine compassion for animals – but that compassion was shaped by and imbued with contemporary class prejudices. Martin and his contemporaries genuinely believed that the lower classes were more cruel than their social superiors. Crowe had argued, ‘Humanity, generally speaking, is, I fear, a quality wholly acquired, and derived from mental, or rather moral, culture. Hence savages, and uninstructed children, scarcely know it, and for the same reason the lower classes are often lamentably deficient therein’.⁵⁵ If, as Windham asserted, bull baiting and fox hunting could not logically be distinguished on the grounds of cruelty, in the early nineteenth century few could comprehend this viewpoint.

Changing Standards

Whatever the reasons, fox hunting and other forms of hunting with dogs were subject to no legislative restrictions in the nineteenth century, nor did the RSPCA alter its position on hunting. Its secretary from 1861, John Colam (1827–1910), trod carefully, anxious not to alienate either government or the sportsmen subscribers to the society.⁵⁶ Slow changes in sensibility were, however, discernible. While the hunting of foxes itself was rarely challenged, excessive cruelty towards them came to be condemned: an MFH became the subject of opprobrium in 1859, for example, for allegedly cutting off the leg of a ‘turned down’ fox – a captive fox released for the chase⁵⁷ – and by that date few would recommend Beckford’s practice of training terriers via practice fights with an old fox whose upper jaw had been cut away or whose teeth had been broken. More obvious still was an increased consideration for the welfare of horses and hounds.

Changing standards in the treatment of horses are brought into sharp relief by comparing Somervile’s *The Chace*, quoted from repeatedly by Beckford, with nineteenth-century texts. Somervile was another hunting country squire, and like Beckford not of the ‘booby’ variety. Classically educated (New College), a respected magistrate and popular, generous man, his political sympathies were Whig rather than Tory and he had a passion for poetry. But he was equally passionate about hunting and his kennels housed beagles and otter-hounds as well as fox hounds. The ‘blood’ in blood sport is only too obvious in Somervile’s poem and it is not only the fox who dies. The exciting chase takes its toll on exhausted horses, bleeding and reeling until

⁵⁵ Crowe, p. 5.

⁵⁶ ODNB.

⁵⁷ David C. Itzkowitz, *Peculiar Privilege: A Social History of Foxhunting, 1753–1885* (Hassocks, Sussex, 1977), p. 141.

In vain th'impatient rider frets and swears,
With galling spurs harrows his mangled sides;
He can no more: his stiff unpliant limbs
Rooted in earth, unmov'd and fix'd he stands,
For ev'ry cruel curse returns a groan,
And sobs, and faints, and dies.

'Who without grief', Somervile asked, could contrast the care lavished on such a mount with his ultimate fate? Yet such spectacles would appear to have been commonplace for at least a century, if not longer. In the opening decades of the nineteenth century fox hunting was dominated by hard-riding as well as hard-living, hard-drinking Regency bucks. But as the sport was gradually reconciled with Victorian respectability and exalted as 'a school of manly virtues'⁵⁸ hunting practices were also modified in accordance with changing sensibilities about cruelty to horses. Galloping over fences will inevitably result in accidents, some of them fatal to man or beast – or both. But the competitive riding described by Somervile, in which horses were casually, callously, ridden to death became (largely) a thing of the past and was increasingly frowned upon. In 1850 *The Times* reproduced an article published in the *Glasgow Herald* which read as follows:

Fox Hunting in Northumberland. – The death of Mr. George Darling, of Hatton-house, has created a feeling of intense sorrow throughout the district in which he resided. We presume it is known to most of our readers that Mr. Darling received severe injuries while hunting on the 21st ult. and died in consequence on the evening of the 24th. The horse which he was riding on was jaded to falling down, the run having been of the most terrible character ... The horse, being completely 'done', was standing still, in a deep furrow, with its head low, unable to move, when the rider struck the spurs into its sides, which caused it to spring and fall over in a convulsive effort. The hind ridge of the saddle came with such weight and such a concussion upon the lower part of Mr. Darling's abdomen, as to cause the injuries which led to his death. ... We are compelled to speak in condemnatory terms of the furious way in which fox hunting has lately been pursued in Northumberland. It is assuming a shape of unmitigated cruelty; and if men set no value on their own lives, they ought to do so on those of their valuable animals. The hunt at which this melancholy accident occurred was absolute steeple chasing, and is denounced throughout the whole district. Some idea of its severity may be formed when we mention the fact that several horses died shortly after.⁵⁹

⁵⁸ Carr, p. 209. On the association of hunting and manliness in the last quarter of the nineteenth century see Rob Boddice, 'Manliness and "The Morality of Field Sports": E.A. Freeman and Anthony Trollope, 1869–71', *The Historian*, 70/1 (February 2008): pp. 1–29. See also Itzkowitz, pp. 21–2 and Jane Ridley, *Fox Hunting* (London, 1990), p. 51.

⁵⁹ *The Times*, 12 March 1850.

By the 1870s, a more compassionate treatment of horses was actively being urged.

George Whyte-Melville's *Riding Recollections*, published in 1875, reveals a sea change in attitudes in this regard. The book opens with a chapter entitled 'Kindness' and he urged his readers,

From the day you slip a halter over [your horse's] ears he should be encouraged to look to you, like a child, for all his little wants and simple pleasures. He should come cantering up from the farthest corner of the paddock when he hears your voice, should ask to have his nose rubbed, his head stroked, his neck patted, with those honest, pleading looks which make the confidence of a dumb creature so touching ... he should be convinced that everything you do to him is right, and that it is impossible for *you*, his best friend, to cause him the least uneasiness or harm.⁶⁰

In the chapter devoted specifically to fox hunting he returns to the issue of kindness: riders should never let their exhausted horses stand in the cold at the end of hunt; they should be jogged home gently, with the rider dismounting to go up or down a hill, and given a mouthful of gruel. The more tired the horse seemed the sooner he should be got home, or alternative shelter found:

your first duty is to the gallant generous animal that would never fail *you* at your need, but would gallop till his heart broke, for your mere amusement and caprice.

Of all our relations with the dumb creation, there is none in which man has so entirely the best of it as the one-sided partnership that exists between the horse and his rider.⁶¹

The same type of consideration was more famously promoted by Anna Sewell's *Black Beauty*. Written between 1871 and 1877, this book became a children's classic in the twentieth century. The author's intent, however, was to teach those who worked with horses, at a time when they remained a primary source of transport, to treat them with greater kindness. *Black Beauty* is generally credited with having contributed to the abolition of use of the bearing rein which held carriage horses' heads at an unnatural angle, interfering with their breathing and causing great pain. It was not the first 'first-person horse story'; *Memoirs of Dick, A Little Poney*, published in 1800 to instruct as well as amuse children, had much earlier catalogued the misfortunes of a horse passed from owner to owner, as well as reproducing the booby fox-hunting squire stereotype.⁶² Sewell's novel

⁶⁰ George J. Whyte-Melville, *Riding Recollections* (London, 1875), p. 13 (emphasis in the original).

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, p. 200 (emphasis in the original).

⁶² The squire of 'Foxhall', from 'long and intimate intercourse' with his hounds and horses, 'seemed to partake of the nature of both species. When he was angry, he growled

can also be thought of as a prose amplification on the print Thomas Bewick was working on at the time of his death in 1828. Titled 'Waiting for Death', it shows an emaciated horse standing alone in a field with its back to the wind. Like Beauty, 'in the morning of his days' this horse had been handsome, 'sprightly and spirited', 'caressed and happy', but was subsequently abused and overused. The text which accompanies the print concludes, 'his days and nights of misery are now drawing to an end; so that, having faithfully dedicated the whole of his powers and his time to the service of unfeeling man, he is at last turned out, unsheltered and unprotected, to starve of hunger and of cold'.⁶³ These earlier protestations, however, had far less public impact.

Fox hunting does not feature prominently in *Black Beauty*, but it is treated briefly in Chapter 2, 'The Hunt'. The description is overwhelmingly negative. Hounds in this case were following a hare and the chase results in the death not merely of the quarry, who is held up 'by the leg, torn and bleeding', to the satisfaction of all, but also of a horse and a rider. The rider is 'the squire's only son, a fine, tall young man, and the pride of his family', his neck broken in a fall. Two horses were also down, and one groaning on the grass with a broken leg is subsequently shot: 'there was a loud bang and a dreadful shriek, and then all was still; the black horse moved no more'. Beauty's mother comments, 'though I am an old horse, and have seen and heard a great deal, I never yet could make out why men are so fond of this sport. They often hurt themselves, often spoil good horses, and tear up the fields, – and all for a hare or a fox or a stag that they could get more easily some other way; but we are only horses, and don't know'.⁶⁴

E.A. Freeman: 'The Morality of Field Sports' (1869)

The concern for the welfare of horses, hounds and at least some quarry evident from Beckford's time clearly broadened and deepened over the course of the nineteenth century, even as the sport of fox hunting was expanding. In 1838 William Howitt was already grumbling that 'the charge of cruelty' was 'perpetually directed against

just like a dog; and when he was pleased he partook of the generous spirit of the horse. On the whole, he was what is called a good sort of country gentleman, that is, a man who is born, lives, and dies on the spot; whose knowledge is confined to his kennel and his stable; who has no idea of pastime beyond field sports, nor of pleasure in society, except in getting drunk ...' *Memoirs of Dick; a Little Pony* (London, 1800), p. 56. This text has recently been reproduced in Heather Keenleyside (ed.), *British It-Narratives, 1750–1830*, vol. 2: *Animals* (London, 2012).

⁶³ Robert Robinson, *Thomas Bewick: His Life and Times* (1887; Newcastle, 1972), p. 164.

⁶⁴ Anna Sewall, *Black Beauty: The Autobiography of a Horse* (1877; New York, 1895), pp. 16, 15.

hunters'.⁶⁵ 'Perpetually', in his day, is something of an exaggeration: public critics were few in number and they tended to be dismissed as cranks. In the late 1830s a prize offered for the best essay on the subject of cruelty to animals was won by another clergyman, John Styles, who wrote on the cruelty of killing animals for amusement.⁶⁶ But, as Itzkowitz notes, of the four essays printed in this contest only two condemned hunting outright, and the brief debate soon fizzled out. While the issue never entirely disappeared, it was not until the late 1860s that it would attract sustained public attention. An article published in the *Fortnightly Review* in 1869 by the historian E.A. Freeman, titled 'The Morality of Field Sports', has been highlighted by a variety of historians of the hunt as marking a turning point in the debate. Raymond Carr identified it as 'the first serious and intellectually respectable attack on fox hunting as such'; David Itzkowitz said that Freeman's article 'may be considered the opening round of the modern debate'.⁶⁷

Like Styles before him Freeman questioned the morality of killing merely for the sake of amusement. In doing so he returned to William Windham's assertion that no one who condemned bull baiting could consistently defend fox hunting. This proposition, argued Freeman, was 'essentially true', but he then turned the implications of that truth on their head. Where Windham had championed both activities Freeman reached a very different conclusion: 'From the admitted right to torture the fox Windham inferred the right to torture the bull. From the admitted sin of torturing the bull I infer the sin of torturing the fox'.⁶⁸ 'As soon as either war or hunting', he argued,

loses its purely defensive character, as soon as it is pursued, not distinctly for the public good, but as a matter of sport or out of sheer love of slaughter, as soon as suffering is needlessly inflicted or wantonly prolonged, it ceases to be a righteous and praiseworthy occupation, and comes under the general head of cruelty.⁶⁹

Modern fox hunting had no legitimate object; it was not undertaken to rid the country of a 'noxious animal': the fox had been preserved so that it might be hunted. Without hunting, the fox, like the wolf, would be extinct in England.⁷⁰ Instead, 'the animal is sought out' to give sport by 'prolonged sufferings: He is pursued till he is worn out by weariness, and then he is put to death with brutalities

⁶⁵ William Howitt, *The Rural Life of England* (2 vols, London, 1838), vol. 1, pp. 63–4.

⁶⁶ John Styles, *The Animal Creation: Its Claims on our Humanity Stated and Claimed* (London, [1839]).

⁶⁷ Carr, p. 204; Itzkowitz, p. 143.

⁶⁸ E.A. Freeman, 'The Morality of Field Sports', *Fortnightly Review*, 6 (1869): pp. 353–85 at p. 353.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 369.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*

equal to anything done in the bear-garden or amphitheatre'.⁷¹ The cruelty inherent in hunting foxes might be disguised by the fact that fox hunters enjoy healthy, outdoor exercise, and Freeman was happy to acknowledge that in some ways fox hunting was 'less revolting, less corrupting, than bull-baiting' in that witnessing the kill was not one of the professed objects of the spectator.⁷² The fox, however, was still subjected to prolonged torture in being pursued, and the longer his torture, 'the greater is the pleasure of his tormentors'.⁷³ Killing for the sake of amusement, Freeman argued, was immoral.

Anthony Trollope took issue with this view. He admitted a degree of cruelty – the fox indeed suffered in the last five to fifteen minutes of the chase – but argued that nature too was cruel. Ultimately, he claimed 'that the end justifies the means, that a minimum of suffering produces a maximum of recreation, and that the fox's life serves as good a purpose as that of any animal which falls that men may live'.⁷⁴ Pursuing and killing an animal for the sake of amusement he did not find immoral.

The controversy continued, Freeman responding to Trollope. Freeman again referred to the parallel between war and hunting; like others before him he said that the two were 'essentially the same thing'. But, departing from Somervile, in either case he only considered the activity lawful when embarked on in self-defence. And he reiterated that the pursuit itself, not merely the kill, was a form of torture.⁷⁵ From the date of Freeman's article Somervile's assertion that hunting was a form of war without guilt would no longer pass uncontested.

Universal Kinship: Henry Salt and the Humanitarian League

Where eighteenth-century defenders of the animal kingdom, such as Primatt and Lawrence, drew heavily on Scripture or a nascent rights discourse to support their position, their counterparts in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century could appeal to science, seizing on Darwin's theory of evolution, publicised in *On the Origin of Species* (1859), to promote the concept of 'universal kinship'. Animals shared a common physical ancestry with human beings and that shared history alone mandated mercy. As J. Howard Moore (1862–1916) argued in *The Universal Kinship* (1906), modern evolutionary science gave the ethic of humaneness 'its strongest corroboration'. To men such as Henry Salt (1851–1939), founder in

⁷¹ Ibid., p. 370.

⁷² Ibid., p. 371.

⁷³ Ibid., p. 374.

⁷⁴ Anthony Trollope, 'Mr Freeman on the Morality of Hunting', *Fortnightly Review*, 6 (1869): pp. 616–25 at p. 625.

⁷⁵ E.A. Freeman, 'The Controversy on Field Sports', *Fortnightly Review*, 8 (1870): pp. 674–91 at p. 682.

1891 of the Humanitarian League which published Moore, lower animals were ‘persons and fellow-beings’, not automata or things.⁷⁶

Salt’s humanitarianism provides an interesting contrast to that of his early nineteenth-century predecessor, ‘Humanity Dick’. Like Martin he too was concerned with cruelties inherent in the criminal justice system, and he published on corporal punishment among other subjects.⁷⁷ And he shared Martin’s concern for beasts of burden:

Centuries hence, perhaps, some learned antiquarian will reconstruct, from such anatomical data as may be procurable, the gaunt, misshapen, pitiable figure of our now vanishing cab-horse, and a more civilized posterity will shudder at the sight of what we still regard as a legitimate agent in locomotion.⁷⁸

But Salt was no fan of blood sports; he was determined to extend legislative protection to the wild animals who remained outside its pale, sacrificed to fashion and sport. Women, he said ‘go furred and feathered with the skins of beasts and birds; and so murderous is their millinery that whole species are sacrificed to this reckless habit’, while ‘[n]othing can exceed the ferocity of the national pastimes, in which, under the plea of affording healthful exercise to their tormenters ... almost every conceivable form of cowardly slaughter is practised as “sportsman-like” and commended as “manly”’.⁷⁹

Helen Taylor (1831–1907), champion of women’s rights and Irish Home Rule and the wife of John Stuart Mill, had taken issue with Trollope’s defence of the sport, arguing in 1870 that gentlemen did not always behave as such, and were capable of vice: ‘[Trollope] sets out by asserting that fox-hunting cannot be unfit for “polite men,” since English gentlemen do it. It is probably not without intention, that Mr. Trollope leaves to his adversaries the odium of replying, that all English gentlemen are not gentle, nor fox-hunters the gentlest among them’.⁸⁰ Henry Salt would push this view much further: not merely was the English gentleman not gentle, he was a positive savage. This savagery, according to historian Anthony Fletcher, began in childhood: ‘In rural England between 1600 and 1914’, he

⁷⁶ Henry Salt, *Seventy Years Among Savages* (London, 1921), pp. 133, 131. On Salt see Stephen Winsten, *Salt and his Circle* (London, 1951). The twentieth-century novelist Isobel Colegate fictionalised the contrast between Edwardian sportsmen (and poachers) and members of the Humanitarian League in *The Shooting Party* (London, 1980). The Salt-like figure (Cardew) in the 1985 film version was played by John Gielgud. The novel was subsequently adapted for radio and aired on BBC Radio 4 in 2010.

⁷⁷ *The Ethics of Corporal Punishment* (London, 1907) and *The Flogging Craze: A Statement of the Case against Corporal Punishment* (London, 1916).

⁷⁸ Salt, *Seventy Years*, pp. 216–17.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 12–13.

⁸⁰ Harriet Taylor, ‘A Few Words on Mr. Trollope’s Defence of Fox-hunting’, *Fortnightly Review*, 7 (1870): pp. 63–8 at p. 63.

argues, 'field sports were the bond which drew boys and fathers together. They learnt their manhood ... with guns, dogs and horses'.⁸¹ Violence and manliness were inseparable and Fletcher cites the boyhood adventures of John Stedman, born in 1744, as informative in this regard. Stedman remembered himself in childhood as 'being eternally besmirched with blood and dirt, fighting street battles, besides killing cats and dogs and breaking windows'.⁸²

Where Richard Martin was convinced that the lower classes had to be taught kindness to animals Salt pointed an accusing finger at his own class. Born in India, educated at Eton and Cambridge, he enjoyed a privileged upbringing but had emphatically rejected the mores of his peers by the age of 30. Having returned to Eton to teach Classics from 1875 to 1884, this teetotal, vegetarian Fabian Socialist retired to Tilford in Surrey to work for humanitarian causes. As a schoolboy he had been informed that his racist father was 'an Englishman and therefore can't be wrong'. His mother told him that the rich became rich through saving, while the poor became poor through drinking. At Eton, his housemaster insisted that the world could only be redeemed by aristocrats: 'That is why Eton exists'.⁸³ Salt singularly failed to absorb any of these orthodoxies, coming instead to the conclusion that

an English public school, or 'boy farm,' where life is mostly so ordered as to foster the more primitive habits of mind, is essentially a nursery of barbarism – a microcosm of that predatory class whose members, like the hunters of old, toil not, neither do they spin, but ever seek their ideal in the twofold cult of sport and soldiery. Certainly the Eton of the 'sixties and 'seventies, whatever superficial show it might make of learning and refinement, was at heart a stronghold of savagery – a most graceful, easy-going savagery, be it granted; for savages, as we know, are often a very pleasant people.⁸⁴

Gradually, he said,

the conviction had been forced on me that we Eton masters, however irreproachable our surroundings, were but cannibals in cap and gown – almost literally cannibals, as devouring the flesh and blood of the higher non-human animals so closely akin to us, and indirectly cannibals, as living by the sweat and toil of the classes who do the hard work of the world.⁸⁵

⁸¹ Anthony Fletcher, *Growing up in England: The Experience of Childhood, 1600–1914* (London, 2008), p. 144.

⁸² *Ibid.*, p. 304.

⁸³ Stephen Winsten, *Salt and his Circle* (London, 1951), pp. 25, 32 and 33.

⁸⁴ Salt, *Seventy Years*, p. 16.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 64. Salt's reminiscences of Eton were not flattering: see *Eton under Hornby: Some Reminiscences and Reflections* (London, 1910) and *The Nursery of Toryism: Reminiscences of Eton under Hornby* (London, 1911).

Salt, to a greater extent than ‘N’, combines the accusations of tyranny and barbarity in his condemnation of blood sports, as well as reviving the booby stereotype. On fox hunting specifically, Salt wrote that it had

always been refreshingly rich in sophistries. The farmer is adjured to be grateful to the Hunt, because the fox is killed, and the fox because his species (not himself) is ‘preserved’: thus the sportsman takes credit either way – on the one hand, for the destruction of a pest; on the other, for saving similar pests from extermination. It is a scene for a Gilbertian opera or a ‘Bab Ballad’; it makes one feel that this British blood-sport must be deleterious not only to the victims of the chase, but to the mental capacity of the gentlemen who indulge in it.⁸⁶

He quoted Nathaniel Hawthorne on the English: ‘the best thing a man born in this island can do is to eat his beef and mutton, and drink his porter, and take things as they are, and think thoughts that shall be so beefish, muttonish, and porterish, that they shall be matters rather material than intellectual’.⁸⁷ The sporting instinct, he claimed,

is due to sheer callousness and insensibility; the sportsman, by force of habit, or by force of hereditary influence, cannot understand or sympathize with the sufferings he causes, and being, in the great majority of instances, a man of slow perception, he naturally finds it much easier to follow the hounds than to follow an argument.⁸⁸

But one day, he predicted,

The laugh must be turned against the true ‘cranks’ and ‘crotchet-mongers’ – the noodles who can give no wiser reason for the infliction of suffering on animals than that it is ‘better for the animals themselves’ – the flesh-eaters who labour under the pious belief that animals were ‘sent’ to us as food – the silly women who imagine that the corpse of a bird is a becoming article of head-gear – the half-witted sportsmen who vow that the vigour of the English race is dependent on the practice of fox-hunting – and the half-enlightened scientists who are unaware that vivisection, has moral and spiritual, no less than physical, consequences.⁸⁹

George Bernard Shaw (1856–1950) wrote the preface for Salt’s *Killing for Sport* (1915). In it he argued,

⁸⁶ Salt, *Seventy Years*, pp. 170–71.

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 68.

⁸⁸ Henry Salt, *Animals’ Rights Considered in Relation to Social Progress* (1892; London, 1980), p. 68.

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 123.

The triviality of sport as compared with the risk and trouble of its pursuit and the gravity of its results makes it much sillier than crime. The idler who can find nothing better to do than to kill is past our patience ... to kill, being all the time quite a good sort of fellow, merely to pass away the time when there are a dozen harmless ways of doing it equally available, is to behave like an idiot or a silly imitative sheep.⁹⁰

Between the Wars: Hugh Lofting and Grey Owl

Modern battle lines in the debate over whether fox hunting was cruel had indeed been drawn in the Freeman/Trollope exchange. The twentieth-century continuation of that debate would be marked not by new arguments advanced on either side but rather by a steady increase in the proportion of the population which concurred with Freeman's views and condemned hunting, and by increasing militancy among some opponents of the hunt.

Henry Salt, it will come as no surprise, was a pacifist, and his pacifism ultimately doomed the Humanitarian League to failure. By 1919 it had ceased to exist, and at that date the RSPCA had not yet taken up the anti-hunting cause. A volume published in 1924 celebrating the first 100 years of the society did not even engage with the debate: fox hunting is simply not mentioned.⁹¹ Sustained, organised opposition to hunting, however, would come from a new organisation, the League for the Prohibition of Cruel Sports. Soon renamed the League Against Cruel Sports (LACS), this organisation was founded in 1924 by Henry Amos (1869–1946) and Ernest Bell (1851–1933). The two men were friends of Salt, vegetarians, and had been members of the Humanitarian League as well as the RSPCA. Bell was also, at different times, involved with the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds, the National Canine Defence League, the Cat's Protection League, the Pit-Ponies Protection Society, the Anti-Bearing-Rein Association and the Animals' Friends Society; in 1929 he received a lifetime award for his work for animal causes from some 22 separate animal welfare societies.⁹² Convinced that it was 'iniquitous to inflict suffering upon sentient animals for the purpose of sport', the League's goal was to abolish the hunting of foxes, deer, otters and hares, badger dredging, and the coursing of rabbits and hares.⁹³ They published their own journal, wrote to the press, lobbied MPs and generally engaged in a sustained propaganda campaign against hunting. They also targeted clergymen and the church: Amos was jailed briefly in 1935 for hurling a copy of Salt's *Creed of Kinship* through a newly installed stained glass window in Exeter Cathedral

⁹⁰ Pp. xxxii–iv.

⁹¹ Edward G. Fairholme and Wellesley Paine, *A Century of Work for Animals: The History of the R.S.P.C.A.* (London, 1924).

⁹² ODNB.

⁹³ *Cruel Sports* (January 1927), p. 1.

during evensong. Commemorating the fourth Earl of Fortescue, a stag hunter, the window in question showed St Hubert, the patron saint of the chase.⁹⁴ By 1929 the League had attracted some 2,000 members.

In the interwar period children too were drawn into the hunting debate. As we will see, the First World War had a significant impact on how the English viewed the sport of fox hunting. The ‘Great War for Civilisation’ provoked in many survivors – indeed, perhaps the majority – nostalgia, affection for the pre-War, comparatively innocent world of the hunting field.⁹⁵ But at least a few returned with a heightened compassion for the suffering of animals as well as men. Among these was the children’s writer Hugh Lofting (1886–1947). Lofting enlisted in the British army in 1916 and spent two years in Flanders and France.⁹⁶ In that time his most famous creation, Dr John Dolittle, came into being. His children, he later revealed, wanted letters from him and he found suitable content a challenge. He had, however, become increasingly aware of the ‘very considerable part’ that animals were playing in the conflict, and increasingly troubled by the fact that where a wounded soldier received the ‘resources of a surgery highly developed by the war’, a seriously wounded horse was shot. This, he said, ‘did not seem quite fair. If we made the animals take the same chances as we did ourselves, why did we not give them similar attention when wounded?’ From these considerations came Lofting’s ‘eccentric country physician with a bent for natural history and a great love of pets’, who abandons his human medical practice for the ‘more attractive therapy of the animal kingdom’.⁹⁷

Like Beckford’s anonymous reviewer or Henry Salt, Lofting was not a man of his time and his opinions were far from mainstream. ‘He was a Victorian who rejected Victorian principles, a man of war who became a man of peace’, wrote Carl Schmidt.⁹⁸ Lofting’s experience in the trenches left him with a hatred of ‘tin-soldierism’, of the glorification of war and battle and the ‘heap of so-called Children’s Classics in which highly painted heroes galloped, glorious and victorious, across bloody battlefields. That kind of battlefield has gone for good – it is still bloody, but you don’t gallop. And since that kind of battlefield has gone, that kind of book – for children – should go too’.⁹⁹ Out of that conviction

⁹⁴ ODNB.

⁹⁵ See Chapter 6 below.

⁹⁶ For Lofting see Edward Blishen, *Hugh Lofting* (London, 1968); Gary D. Schmidt, *Hugh Lofting* (New York, 1992); and the ODNB.

⁹⁷ Lofting, *The Book of Junior Authors*, quoted in Schmidt, pp. 6–7.

⁹⁸ *Hugh Lofting*, p. 2.

⁹⁹ ‘Children and Internationalism’, quoted in Schmidt, p. 10. As Schmidt notes, horses like men ‘died screaming out of burning lungs’ during the gas attacks of the First World War (p. 51). On the conflation of animal and human suffering during the First World War see also Michael Morpurgo’s children’s novel *War Horse* (London, 1982) and the recent theatrical and film adaptations of that novel.

came the Dolittle books, with their nonconformist hero, 'a round, solid, sensible figure, without dash or conventional dignity',

who goes to jail more often surely than any other hero of children's fiction ... a man 'not fond of rules', who hates frauds, and publicity-seekers ... someone who so despises honours that he would prefer a pound of tea to a knighthood ... an opponent of all cruelty, but especially that of ordinary zoos, circuses and pet shops.¹⁰⁰

The doctor does not merely attend to the physical ailments of the animal world but actively asserts their rights. He puts an end to bull-fighting in Monteverde in *The Voyages of Doctor Dolittle* (1922) and, in *Doctor Dolittle's Circus* (1924), after helping a circus seal to escape back to the sea, he takes on fox hunting.

Having been arrested on suspicion of murder (witnesses mistakenly assumed the seal disguised in a cape and bonnet and thrown into the sea was his wife¹⁰¹), when the doctor is visited in prison by the JP before whom he is due to appear, he immediately launches into a criticism of hunting, continuing an argument they had started 15 years earlier. The sport, he said 'with great earnestness', 'ought to be stopped ... altogether'. The fox

is not given a square deal. One fox against dozens of dogs! Besides, why should he be hunted? A fox has his rights, the same as you and I have. It's absurd: a lot of grown men on horses, with packs of hounds roaring across country after one poor little wild animal.¹⁰²

Sir William, who hunts two days a week, is happy to arrange for the charges against the doctor to be withdrawn but refuses to engage in the debate over hunting, saying firmly that the numbers of foxes needed to be kept down.¹⁰³ But the doctor wins in the end. Freed from jail, he sets off to walk home. Indulging in a nap along the way he awakes to be confronted by a vixen with three cubs: the vixen has recognised the famous animal doctor and wishes to consult him about a problem with one of her cubs' paws. Their conversation, however, is soon interrupted:

¹⁰⁰ Blishen, pp. 24, 27–8.

¹⁰¹ There was a similar nineteenth-century real-life story: the Irishman George Robert Fitzgerald 'had a pet bear whom he treated as a boon companion, travelling everywhere with him, even in stage coaches, to the terror of other occupants. On one occasion his lawyer who was on a journey with him in his carriage, discovered with the first light of dawn that the gentleman beside him swathed in a blue travelling cloak and red cape, with his head wrapped in a white cloth, was covered in fur and had enormous teeth in a huge mouth. When, upon Fitzgerald's command, the brute kissed the attorney, the poor man leapt from the carriage and ran for safety'. Lynam, p. 33.

¹⁰² *Doctor Dolittle's Circus*, p. 140.

¹⁰³ *Ibid.*, p. 143.

The mother fox had stopped speaking, the beautiful brush of her tail straight and quivering, her nose outstretched, pitiful terror staring from her wide-open eyes. ... ‘*The Horn!*’ she whispered through chattering teeth. ‘They’re out! It’s th – th – the huntsman’s horn!’

As he looked at the trembling creature John Dolittle was reminded of the occasion which had made him an enemy of fox-hunting for life – when he met an old dog fox one evening lying half dead with exhaustion under a tangle of blackberries.¹⁰⁴

The doctor quickly scoops the cubs into his pockets and their mother into the breast of his coat and awaits the oncoming of hounds. They soon bowl Dolittle over, but he speaks hound as fluently as fox and orders them firmly away. Galloway attempts to persuade him to part with just one, offering the standard justification – ‘they eat rabbits and chickens you know’ – but the doctor points out that foxes have to get food for themselves, whereas hounds have food given them. An exasperated Sir William, MFH as well as JP, then rides up shouting that he should have left the doctor in jail. But Dolittle is not finished. He not only saves this particular vixen and her family but provides future protection from hounds’ ‘horribly keen noses’ in the form of bottles of camphor and eucalyptus, ‘scent-destroyers’ to be broken and rolled in as needed to deter pursuit. Soon every fox in Sir William’s country is armed with a ‘Dolittle Safety Packet’ during the hunting season. The ‘famous Ditcham pack’ goes out of existence’, Sir William resigned to the fact that he cannot hunt unless he succeeds in breeding and training ‘a pack of eucalyptus hounds’. ‘I’ll bet my last penny’, he says, ‘it’s Dolittle’s doing. He always said he’d like to stop the sport altogether. And, by George! so far as this country is concerned, he’s done it!’¹⁰⁵

Edward Blishen identifies the moment when Dolittle, ‘*his pockets full of foxes*’, runs out of the spinney to borrow money from the Master as one of the greatest of the series, rich in comedy.¹⁰⁶ But comic effect masked a more serious message. For Lofting, the Great War had marked a dividing line in sensibilities. Blishen writes that ‘the Dolittle books were part of the anti-war literature that followed the Great War’, albeit unique in being addressed to children rather than adults.¹⁰⁷ Lofting’s response echoes Freeman’s argument that war and hunting were essentially the same thing. For Lofting, both activities were tainted: John Dolittle detests war *and* fox hunting, ‘and the romantic notions that accumulate around them’.¹⁰⁸

¹⁰⁴ Ibid., p. 149.

¹⁰⁵ Ibid., pp. 158, 165. Later in the twentieth century hunt saboteurs would follow his lead, using citronella and lemon grass as well as eucalyptus to put hounds off the scent. Emma Griffin, *Blood Sport: Hunting in Britain since 1066* (New Haven, 2007), p. 197.

¹⁰⁶ Blishen, p. 29.

¹⁰⁷ Ibid., p. 31.

¹⁰⁸ Ibid., p. 24. The association is not exclusive: in both his opinions regarding the suffering of animals, and the origins of those feelings in his experience of the First World

The impact of Lofting's story was probably minimal: children, as we have seen, were being actively courted by the fox-hunting community; certainly they were exposed to both sides of the debate. The final chapter of Muriel Wace's roughly contemporaneous *The Young Rider*, for instance, firmly rejected any accusations of cruelty, instructing her readers not to make up their minds as to whether hunting was cruel 'without due consideration'. Both the fox and wild deer would soon become extinct if hunting were abolished, and those who condemned the sport

must condemn also the carnivorous habits of the human race. It is difficult to see how people can condemn one without condemning the other also. No one preys more upon other animals than does man; he is indeed 'red' in tooth and claw, he is always preying upon other animals, and often quite unnecessarily. Is it worse to kill a fox because you enjoy hunting him than to kill a lamb because you enjoy eating him?¹⁰⁹

Freeman had already answered 'yes' to her question, Trollope 'no', but the debate continued.

In the 1930s 'Grey Owl' – the conservationist Archibald Stanfeld Belaney (1888–1938), who spent much of his life in Canada pretending to be an 'Indian'¹¹⁰ – argued against Wace's view, aiming to persuade children to eschew blood sports. The subject had become sufficiently controversial that he was, in 1937, prohibited from broadcasting a speech on the Children's Hour in which he attacked the sport. In that year a leading article in *The Times* was still supporting Somerville's maxim that hunting was war without the guilt, allowing 'the characteristics of the fighting man to be exercised in peace and fellowship'.¹¹¹ But in 1931 the British Field Sports Society had identified 140 letters and articles in the print press which had attacked the sport of fox hunting and accused the BBC of 'broadcasting talks which were "prejudicial to sport"'.¹¹² An excerpt from his intended broadcast was

War, Hugh Lofting has a companion in Henry Williamson. Williamson, too, responded with revulsion and a life-long abhorrence of cruelty to animals. The author of *Tarka the Otter*, however, which details the hunt and death of an otter from the otter's perspective, is equally famous for being a Fascist.

¹⁰⁹ [Muriel Wace], *The Young Rider*, 6th ed. (London, 1942), p. 155. Subsequent critics of the pony clubs which encouraged children to hunt argued that the organization's most important function was 'to instruct [them] in the art of hunting animals to death'. NSACS *Bulletin* (May 1964), quoted in Richard H. Thomas, *The Politics of Hunting* (Aldershot, 1983), p. 121.

¹¹⁰ For Belaney see the *ODNB* and Donald B. Smith, *From the Land of Shadows: The Making of Grey Owl* (Saskatoon, 1990). Children had earlier been targeted by Alice Drakoules, founder of the Band of Mercy, a children's group within the RSPCA (1887). Drakoules was subsequently involved in the foundation of the Humanitarian League, hosting its inaugural meeting and serving at times as treasurer. *ODNB*.

¹¹¹ *The Times*, 4 November 1937.

¹¹² Thomas, *Politics of Hunting*, p. 140.

thus censored by the corporation. Grey Owl had asked children to promise to be kind to animals and like Freeman argued that entertainment was no justification for taking their lives. More specifically, he asked them not to

join in a chase where foxes, stags, or otters or hares, are driven to the last extremity of terror, and misery, until at last, with no chance of escape, they stand there looking for mercy, but finding none, surrounded by a horde of dogs, and men, and sometimes, I am ashamed to say, women and even children, and then, defenceless, terrified, helpless, and *alone* – no one near to help them – they are literally mobbed to death.

Could such a chase be considered ‘fair play’ or ‘sport’? If so, he continued, ‘please *don’t* be a sportsman, or sportswoman’. ‘Remember’, he concluded, ‘that only those whose lives have been too easy, with too much money and not enough to do, who do not understand what hardship and pain can be, would inflict such misery on a helpless fellow creature ...’¹¹³

While Grey Owl’s attack conflated class and cruelty, this was not the sticking point for the BBC. The corporation insisted that his request that children promise never to take part in the hunting of foxes, stags, otters or hares be deleted because a BBC regulation laid down that no reference to fox hunting could be made on air unless it allowed for a full debate of the pros and cons of the sport.¹¹⁴ Grey Owl refused to make the cut and the broadcast scheduled for 20 December 1937 was never heard. On 14 November, however, while in Newcastle, he had already spoken on radio against fox hunting, condemning in much the same language ‘the barbarities of the hunt’, a ‘so-called sport [that] seems little more than outmoded mediaeval cruelty’.¹¹⁵

The same decade saw a private attack on the sport advanced on different grounds. Fox hunting, as we shall see, was in the twentieth century often described as a type of religion, yet for some this was sacrilege. The Anglo-Catholic Samuel Gurney wrote to John Betjeman in 1934, arguing that hunting

outrages conscience ... Its indefinite continuance is unthinkable. It won’t really square with faith. Put it another way. Picture the bright young thing leaving the altar in the morning, her lips rosy with the Blood of Jesus: returning home at night, her finger dripping with the blood of vixen. Or Jesus, Mary, and Joseph all in at the death and blooded? Have I put it too strongly?¹¹⁶

¹¹³ Repr. in Lovat Dickson (ed.), *The Green Leaf: A Tribute of Grey Owl* (London, 1938), pp. 104–6. I am grateful to Don Smith for bringing this incident to my attention.

¹¹⁴ See Dickson, p. 21, and Smith, pp. 21 and 23.

¹¹⁵ Quoted in Smith, pp. 186 and 288 n26. See also ‘Grey Owl on England’, *The Listener*, 24 November 1937, p. 1123, cited *ibid.*

¹¹⁶ Candida Lycett Green’s papers, letter from Samuel Gurney to John Betjeman, quoted in John Betjeman, *Letters Volume One: 1926–1951* (London, 1994), p. 135.

A few years later, however, an appreciative biography of Peter Beckford was published. In it his biographer condemned equally robustly 'those misinformed human beings who ... would like to see all manly sports which involved the death or exhaustion of any animal abolished by law'.¹¹⁷

The Debate from the Second World War

At mid-century, the official position of the RSPCA continued to be that fox hunting was 'an effective and traditional method' of controlling the fox population. Shooting or poisoning foxes would be more cruel, and in the absence of an alternative mode of control hunting must be allowed to continue.¹¹⁸ This same line was taken in 1957, although by that date some members were becoming increasingly unhappy with it.¹¹⁹ In 1968 the society affirmed its opposition, via a postal ballot of its 30,000 members, to the hunting of deer with hounds, otter hunting and hare coursing but continued to believe that fox hunting was 'another matter'.¹²⁰ Not until 1976 was the RSPCA persuaded that fox hunting was not the best method for controlling the fox population. A policy statement in that year said that the society was opposed 'to any hunting of animals with hounds' and during the eighties membership polls revealed increasing hostility to fox hunting.¹²¹

Other organisations were more militant in their resistance to the sport. Internal strife at mid-century had caused a decline in LACS membership, but the numbers had returned by the 1970s and in 1982 membership was in the range of 11,000–13,000.¹²² In 1963 a spin-off organisation, the Hunt Saboteurs Association (HSA),

¹¹⁷ A. Henry Higginson, *Peter Beckford Esquire: Sportsman, Traveller, Man of Letters: A Biography* (London, 1937), p. 158.

¹¹⁸ 'R.S.P.C.A. and Blood Sports: No Alternative to Fox Hunting', *The Times*, 19 February 1949.

¹¹⁹ 'R.S.P.C.A. Stand by Refusal to Oppose Fox Hunting', *The Times*, 20 June 1957. See also "'Obstruction" by R.S.P.C.A.', *The Times*, 30 March 1960; 'New R.S.P.C.A. Clash on Fox-Hunting', *The Times*, 10 April 1961; 'Uproar ends R.S.P.C.A. Meeting after Police are Called: Demand for Society to Declare itself against Fox-Hunting', *The Times*, 15 June 1961; 'Poll of R.S.P.C.A. on Fox Hunting', *The Times*, 16 June 1961. For both the hunting community's efforts to ensure the society remained on their side and internal tensions see Thomas, *Politics of Hunting*, Chapter 4.

¹²⁰ 'Blood sports lose by 10,000 votes in RSPCA poll', *The Times*, 25 September 1968.

¹²¹ For press coverage of this development see, e.g., 'Clash after RSPCA opposes fox hunting', *The Times*, 3 February 1976; 'RSPCA vote today on fox-hunting', *The Times*, 25 February 1976.

¹²² Thomas, *Politics of Hunting*, p. 85. For the history of the LACS to 1982 see *ibid.*, pp. 85–103. For the League today see www.league.org.uk. Fearing a potential overturn of the ban, the LACS continues to argue against blood sports via a 'Keep Cruelty History' campaign: www.keepcrueltyhistory.com.

had also emerged, whose specific aim was to sabotage and disrupt hunts. They interfered with scents (much as Dr Dolittle had done), distracted hounds from huntsmen, gave false directions to hunt followers; from the 1970s they also distributed leaflets and protested at agricultural and horse shows. HSA members had complicated affiliations and relations with both the RSPCA and the LACS and the association itself bred a splinter group dedicated to direct action that was not limited to fox hunting: the Animal Liberation Front (ALF) also targeted laboratories that used animals for experimentation, battery farms and so forth. In the hunting field, some of the confrontations have been violent.¹²³

Where Salt and his contemporaries had largely been dismissed as fringe lunatics, public opinion was increasingly on the side of these various organisations. In the first independent poll conducted on the issue, by Gallup Polls in 1958, 53 per cent indicated support for the abolition of fox hunting; in 1966, 62 per cent disapproved of the sport although only 50 per cent agreed that it should be legally abolished; by 1978, 60 per cent of the electorate supported a legal ban while an RSPCA survey conducted in 1981 indicated that 72 per cent of those sampled favoured legal abolition.¹²⁴ The tide was turning, although class and party divides were also obvious. Discussing poll results from 1972 and 1978, Richard Thomas concluded that

the higher the individual's social class, the more against a bill to abolish fox hunting he was likely to be. Politically, Liberal and Labour voters were 68 per cent in favour of a bill whereas only 51 per cent of Conservative voters favoured moves to abolish the sport. Environment or place of residence emerged as a significant factor in [the 1978] poll with 65 per cent of conurban dwellers, but only 53 per cent of rural dwellers, favouring a law against fox hunting.¹²⁵

In 1978, Thomas argued, 'the largest sub-group differences on the fox-hunting question were between the urban, working-class, left-wing young females and

¹²³ On the 'sabs' see Thomas, *Politics of Hunting*, pp. 104–14; Griffin, pp. 196–9. By the 1970s, Griffin argues, 'The Times' reports of the annual Boxing Day hunts contained as much detail on the antics of the hunt saboteurs as they did on the hunt' (p. 197). See also Michael Clayton, *Endangered Species: Foxhunting – the history, the passion and the fight for survival* (London, 2004), pp. 63–7. Like the LACS, the HSA fears an overturn of the ban. For the history of the HSA and the ALF see Thomas, *Politics of Hunting*, pp. 104–14; for its current stance and activities, www.hsa.enviroweb.org. The various animal welfare societies were fraught with internal tensions and in 1932 some of the original members of the LACS, including Salt and Bell, had defected to form a competing organization, the National Society for the Abolition of Cruel Sports (NSACS). This society petered out in the 1970s and was described by Richard Thomas as a 'respectable failure' and 'spent force' by 1980. See *Politics of Hunting*, pp. 114–22.

¹²⁴ Thomas, *Politics of Hunting*, pp. 192–3.

¹²⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 193.

the older middle-aged, upper-middle-class, Conservative rural men. The first are stalwarts of the anti-hunting community, and the latter provide the backbone of the hunting community'.¹²⁶ Subsequent polls reflected the same trend: in 1983 *The Times* reported that 65 per cent of those polled by National Opinion Polls disapproved of fox hunting and 53 per cent wanted it banned; a MORI poll roughly 10 years on indicated that 70 per cent of respondents had said that fox hunting should be made illegal. MORI's chief pollster, Bob Worcester, attributed the result to 'a change of culture, lifestyle and values'.¹²⁷

In the 1991–92 season, an LACS member posing as a hunt supporter shot a video of the Quorn cub hunting, in which one fox was shot in a hole while being held by terrier-men and another pulled out of the ground and thrown into a hedge, from which it bolted directly into a pack of hounds and was killed. The *Mail on Sunday* published the story and copies of the video were sent to various television stations and other newspapers as well as to MPs. This, as Michael Clayton concluded ruefully, 'was the most successful anti-hunting propaganda on a mass scale ever achieved'.¹²⁸ The society might, with less trouble, have drawn public attention to the tenth Duke of Beaufort's treatise on fox hunting, published in 1980. Beaufort reiterated long-standing arguments in favour of the sport, arguing that 'the prime purpose of fox-hunting is to kill foxes in as controlled and efficient a way as possible'. Foxes were vermin and agricultural pests and 'a well-conducted Hunt' was the most humane way of dispatching them.¹²⁹ While Beaufort followed Beckford, and his grandfather, in preferring those who ride to hunt over those who hunt to ride,¹³⁰ he downplayed enjoyment of the kill: 'I would make so bold as to say that no one who hunts seriously is interested in the actual kill. Should there be people who are so perverted, it is most unlikely that they will achieve their ambition very often ...'.¹³¹ That the kill is necessary, however, and what achieving it might entail, is made evident in his matter-of-fact discussion of cub hunting:

one really well-beaten cub killed fair and square is worth half a dozen fresh ones killed the moment they are found without hounds having to exert themselves in

¹²⁶ Ibid. See also 'Labour Manifesto may seek blood sports ban', *The Times*, 8 March 1978; 'Ban on blood sports put forward as Labour aim', *The Times*, 13 June 1978; 'Life, liberty and the pursuit of foxes', *The Times*, 14 June 1978; 'Labour to reconsider ban on blood sports', *The Times*, 29 June 1978.

¹²⁷ 'Animal welfare a key issue, survey shows', *The Times*, 13 May 1983; 'Blood sports meet their Waterloo?' *The Independent*, 3 March 1995.

¹²⁸ Michael Clayton, *Foxhunting in Paradise* (London, 1993), p. 98. On the video scandal see generally Chapter 7, 'Trust Betrayed'.

¹²⁹ Duke of Beaufort, *Fox-hunting* (London, 1980), p. 62.

¹³⁰ Ibid., p. 111.

¹³¹ Ibid., p. 63.

their task. It is essential that hounds should have their blood up and learn to be savage with their fox before he is killed.¹³²

A cub gone to ground should be dug out and eaten by hounds; adult foxes were similarly to be dug out, dispatched with a humane killer and the carcass thrown to hounds to keep them keen.¹³³

Conclusion: ‘Barbarity in High Places’?

In her biography of Richard Martin, Shevawn Lynam comments that the Reverend Henry Crowe ‘condemned all hunting, and reminded his readers that Arthur Young had called fox-hunting “the cricket of savages”’.¹³⁴ I have been unable to locate the quotation in Crowe’s *Zoophilos* – but at any rate it would be a misquotation. It was the Irish ball game of *hurling*, not the hunting of foxes, that Young described as a form of uncouth cricket.¹³⁵ The misquotation is understandable, however, as it invokes and conflates the ‘tyranny and barbarity’ criticisms of fox hunting.¹³⁶

If Young did not make that particular connection, ‘N’ was not the only person in his time to do so. In *Mental Amusement* (1797) another anonymous critic wrote:

The amusement of hunting has been called a remnant of Gothic barbarity; and certainly it carries with it no traces of civilization... It leads to the commission of petty trespasses without compunction; and the industrious farmer suffers in his property, and in his domestic peace, from the ravages of an equestrian cabal, who commit mischief out of sport, and outrage out of bravado.¹³⁷

In the late eighteenth century, however, these were decidedly minority views. From the turn of the nineteenth century until that century’s end the issues of class and cruelty to animals converged more commonly in condemnation of the activities of the labouring (or worse, non-labouring) poor. A few critics, Crowe among them, pointed out that the leisured, moneyed classes took their amusement in ‘pursuits on which ... misery is necessarily and inseparably attendant’.¹³⁸ In the

¹³² Ibid., p. 69. Cub hunting is now referred to euphemistically as ‘autumn hunting’.

¹³³ Ibid., pp. 157, 160.

¹³⁴ Lynam, p. 206.

¹³⁵ Arthur Young, *A Tour in Ireland*, 2nd ed. (2 vols, London, 1780), vol. 2, p. 230. The passage is quoted in the *Monthly Review*’s article on this book as well (September 1780): p. 168.

¹³⁶ It was repeated more recently by the Irish Council Against Blood Sports agricultural correspondent Dick Power in a letter to the *Irish Examiner* published on 31 July 2007.

¹³⁷ Anon., *Mental Amusement: Consisting of moral essays, allegories and tales, interspersed with poetical pieces* (London, 1797), pp. 114–15.

¹³⁸ Crowe, pp. 16–17.

Memoirs of Dick, A Little Poney, the pony endures ill-treatment at the hands of both the lower classes (his original gypsy owners) and the fox-hunting squirearchy, finding safety only with middle-class owners.¹³⁹ Generally speaking, however, until roughly the final quarter of the nineteenth century it was the lower classes who tended to be seen as 'savages', their treatment of working animals, and their particular forms of blood sport, which met with public disapprobation. This focus only began to shift, and then gradually, towards the century's end. Freeman, in arguing that in terms of cruelty no logical distinction could be made between bull baiting and fox hunting, did not dwell on the class implications of this argument, but by the end of the nineteenth century a few stubborn voices were protesting against 'barbarity in high places'.¹⁴⁰

Many of the new, anti-hunting contingent were consistently anti-Establishment. Henry Salt, who made extensive use of the word 'savage' to describe his own class, is one example in this regard. Sir Granville George Greenwood, the Liberal MP who succeeded in steering a Protection of Animals Act through Parliament in 1911, is another. This act did not touch hunting or the treatment of wild animals but nonetheless constitutes a 'legal milestone', consolidating prior legislation protecting 'captive and domestic animals' and adding to the list of offences covered.¹⁴¹ Over the course of his political career Greenwood's various causes included

reforms concerning land, education, the House of Lords, poor and labour laws, pensions, death certification, women's suffrage, national health insurance, proportional representation, handling of police complaints, rights of colonial natives, and, between 1914 and 1918, the condition of British troops abroad and the quality of the army's medical services. He was critical of capital punishment and strongly opposed the flogging of schoolchildren and colonial natives.¹⁴²

But animals were his main concern.

The LACS, too, Thomas argues, was from its origins in the 1920s 'consistently anti-establishment': it 'used class-consciousness as a necessary ingredient in its programme' and its 'most successful leaders' had all been 'most at home when attacking the establishment'.¹⁴³ As 'The Establishment' came under more

¹³⁹ On this see Andrew O'Malley, *The Making of the Modern Child: Children's Literature and Childhood in the Late Eighteenth Century* (New York, 2003), pp. 64–5.

¹⁴⁰ J. Stratton, *Royal Sports* (London, 1891), p. 1.

¹⁴¹ 1&2 Geo. V, c. 27 (1911); Thomas, *Politics of Hunting*, pp. 214–15.

¹⁴² ODNB.

¹⁴³ Thomas, *Politics of Hunting*, p. 93. In comparing the results of questionnaires distributed in the 1970s to MFHs and members of the HSA Thomas found deep social divisions. MFHs tended to be socially conservative, more authoritarian, more inclined to favour organised religion and 'undoubtedly more racist than saboteurs', although he stopped short of calling them 'positively racist'. He concluded that 'on almost all social, economic,

sustained and widespread attack later in the century the reputation of both fox hunters and fox hunting would suffer. This attack coincided with growing public condemnation of fox hunting as cruel so that, unlike in Crowe's time, members of the traditional elite who continued to hunt became targets of intense hostility. Royal participation in fox hunting, as we have seen, was increasingly condemned; in 1957 Edward Hemingway blamed royal patronage for enabling hunting to remain legal.¹⁴⁴ Others blamed the aristocracy, the tenth Duke of Beaufort in particular, for reintroducing royalty to hunting. In December 1984 – the same year in which the editor of *Horse and Hound* was confidently asserting that Prince Charles's enthusiastic endorsement of fox hunting was an asset – this led to a macabre attempt by a splinter group of the HSA to dig up the body of 'Master' and send his severed head to Princess Anne.¹⁴⁵

political and moral questions the two populations sharply disagree' (p. 164). For extended analysis of his questionnaires and his methodology see Chapter 7 and its appendices.

¹⁴⁴ *The Guardian*, 27 March 1957. Hemingway, a journalist and photographer, was a free spirit indeed, opening with his wife a naturist club (nudist colony), the North Devon Club of Beaworthy, in 1936. 'Not so hidden assets?', *The Telegraph*, 11 May 2004.

¹⁴⁵ *The Times*, 27 December 1984; *ODNB*.

Chapter 4

‘Come Hup! I say, you hugly beast’!¹

The Hunt in Literature

The fox was running easily. He came up the hill through the short wet grass, dropped into a ditch and ran up through the flowing water. The ditch was deep, overgrown with hawthorn and overhung with enormous elms whose last yellow leaves were gleaming against the sky: a wet, November sky, heavy over the hill and over the brimming, water-streaked valley below.

K.M. Peyton, *Flambards*, p. 11

Introduction

Fox hunting, as Virginia Woolf noted in her essay on the infamous MFH Jack Mytton, quickly worked its way into English literature. The hunting squire had become a literary stereotype in the eighteenth century and as fox hunting took hold as a sport in the nineteenth it developed a literature of its own, one which ranged from technical manuals and sporting journalism through poetry and prose fiction. Largely written by men – the Irish ‘Somerville and Ross’ are an exception² – and intended for adults, the literary reputations of most of the authors in question remain somewhat dubious, although the sport infiltrated mainstream fiction. However, as social mores with respect both to people and animals, discussed in the previous two chapters, changed over the centuries, so too did the representation of fox hunting. Where Anthony Trollope incorporated hunting scenes into his novels as an acknowledged feature of English life, in the early twentieth century the sport would gradually be reduced to literary shorthand, used to signify an anachronistic social world and social structure. After the Second World War, it was increasingly confined to children’s literature written by women. Vanishing in adult fiction, that is, it became a standard feature of the ‘pony book’ until, in the 1970s, that genre too disappeared. In literature, fox hunting fell victim to the twin criticisms of ‘tyranny and barbarity’ well before the legal ban. This chapter

¹ R.S. Surtees, *Handley Cross; or, Mr Jorrocks’s Hunt* (1843; London, 1903), p. 136.

² Edith Anna Oenone Somerville (1858–1949) and Violet Florence Martin (1862–1915), who wrote under the pseudonym of ‘Martin Ross’, were the authors of *Some Experiences of an Irish RM* (London, 1899) and *Further Experiences of an Irish RM* (London, 1908). Somerville was also the first female MFH in Ireland (1903–08; 1912–19). See Gifford Lewis, *Somerville and Ross: The World of the Irish RM* (Harmondsworth, 1985).

surveys both literary representations of fox hunting between Beckford and the ban and changing reception of the fox-hunting literature.

The Nineteenth Century

Robert Smith Surtees (1805–1864)

Robert Surtees is today virtually synonymous with hunting literature, and something of a cult figure. Studies of his mid-nineteenth-century fiction began to appear in the early 1930s and his novels remain in print.³ His reputation, however, was slow in coming and largely posthumous.

Surtees was born and grew up in Northumberland. Not long after qualifying as a solicitor his life changed: in 1838 he inherited the family estate, with the Wind-in-the-Willows-like name of Hamsterley Hall. Surtees, who does not seem to have practised law, from that date embedded himself in country life, farming and becoming both a JP and deputy lieutenant for the county. In between law and farming he had also embarked, anonymously, on a career in sporting journalism, contributing to the *Sporting Magazine* and from 1830 serving as its hunting correspondent. In 1831 he created a rival, the *New Sporting Magazine*, for which he was not merely hunting correspondent but editor as well.⁴ It was in this magazine that the famous Jorrocks the fox-hunting grocer first appeared. In 1838 the Jorrocks stories were reprinted as *Jorrocks' Jaunts and Jollities* and Jorrocks tales continued in the novels *Handley Cross* (1843) and *Hillingdon Hall* (1845). *An Analysis of the Hunting Field* (1846), *Hawbuck Grange* (1847), *Mr Sponge's Sporting Tour* (1853), *Ask Mama* (1858) and *Plain or Ringlets* (1860) followed, with *Mr Facey Romford's Hounds* (1865) published after the author's death. Most of the novels, like the Jorrocks stories, were published in serial form in the *New*

³ See F.J. Harvey Darton, *From Surtees to Sassoon* (London, 1931); Anthony Steel, *Jorrocks' England* (London, 1932); Frederick Watson, *Robert Smith Surtees: A Critical Study* (London, 1933). Surtees attracted attention again after the Second World War; see Leonard Cooper, *R.S. Surtees* (London, 1952); Aubrey Noakes, *Horses, Hounds, and Humans: Being the Dramatized Story of R.S. Surtees* (London, 1957). Unsurprisingly he seems to have fallen out of fashion in the sixties but was revived again intermittently from the late 1970s. See Bonnie Rayford Neumann, *Robert Smith Surtees* (Boston, 1978); John Welcome, *The Sporting World of R.S. Surtees* (Oxford, 1982); Norman Gash, *Robert Surtees and Early Victorian Society* (Oxford, 1993) and Gash's entry for Surtees in the *ODNB*. See also Troy Gregory, 'R.S. Surtees and the Rise of Victorian Sporting Literature' (unpublished PhD thesis, University of Western Ontario, 2002). I greatly enjoyed following Gregory's Weldon marginalia as well as the thesis itself.

⁴ On nineteenth-century sporting journalism see Carl B. Cone (ed.), *Hounds in the Morning: Sundry Sports of Merry England. Selections from The Sporting Magazine, 1792–1836* (Lexington, 1981); Raymond Carr, *English Fox Hunting: A History* (London, 1976), Chapter 5; and Gregory, Chapter 1.

Sporting Magazine before they appeared as books, and in most – *Ask Mama* and *Plain or Ringlets?* being exceptions – sport plays a central role.

When Surtees began to publish fiction in the 1840s the morality of fox hunting had not yet become a subject of extended debate and the legitimacy of the sport is taken for granted. Surtees' fox, like Somerville's, is 'a reg'lar hen-stealin', goose-gobblin', turkey-worryin' old sinner'⁵ and there is no squeamishness in his descriptions of the kill:

After running about three-quarters of a mile at best pace, Mr Sponge viewed the fox crossing a large grass field with all the steam up he could raise, a few hundred yards ahead of the pack, who were streaming along most beautifully, not viewing, but gradually gaining on him. At last they broke from scent to view, and presently rolled him over and over among them.

'WHO-HOOP!' screamed Mr Sponge, throwing himself off his horse and rushing in amongst them. 'WHO-HOOP!' repeated he, still louder, holding the fox up in grim death above the baying pack.

'Who-hoop!' exclaimed Miss Glitters, reining in delight alongside the chestnut. 'Who-hoop!' repeated she, diving into the saddle-pocket for her lace-fringed handkerchief.

'Throw me my whip!' cried Mr Sponge, repelling the attacks of the hounds from behind with his heels. Having got it, he threw the fox on the ground, and clearing a circle, he off with his brush in an instant. 'Tear him and eat him!' cried he, as the pack broke in on the carcass. 'Tear him and eat him!' repeated he, as he made his way up to Miss Glitters with the brush, exclaiming, 'We'll put this in your hat, alongside the cock's feathers'.⁶

Jonathan Swift had commented in the eighteenth century that 'most sorts of diversion in men, women, children and other animals are an imitation of fighting', and Surtees obviously concurred. No guilt or blame was yet to be attached to such imitation. Fox hunting, he said, not merely quoting but embellishing Somerville, was 'war without the guilt' and much less of the danger. In the first half of the nineteenth century this was true, although particular rules of combat had to be observed. Ample evidence of sporting scruples can be found in Surtees' descriptions of the hunting both of 'bag foxes' – imported, captive foxes released for the day where native foxes were lacking – and carted deer, neither of which activities he found sporting. 'Never hunted a bag fox in my life', asserts a dismayed Facey Romford on being sent one. 'Should be 'shamed to hunt a bag fox'. He does, in fact, reluctantly hunt this one, but not to a kill, and vows it will be the first

⁵ *Mr Facey Romford's Hounds*, p. 95.

⁶ *Mr Sponge's Sporting Tour* (Stroud, 2006), pp. 505–6. See also *Mr Facey Romford's Hounds* (Stroud, 2006), pp. 95–6, 187 and Rowland Egerton Warburton's poem 'The Little Red Rover' (1859): 'In pieces they tear him,/Who-whoop! Who-who-whoop!'.

and last time.⁷ Surtees was also famously opposed to cock baiting and badger baiting, which make no appearance in his novels. However, as Frederick Watson commented in the 1930s, ‘Surtees, like his contemporaries, was innocent of that modern obsession which endows animals with human premonitions, emotions, and nerves, and which, until *Brer Rabbit*, *Black Beauty*, and others, had no place in our literature’.⁸

While Surtees’ views on cruelty roughly coincided with majority opinion during his lifetime, his treatment of class issues ensured that his novels were not popular with contemporaries. Here, he actively offended. Norman Gash commented in his revised entry for Surtees in the *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*:

His books ran counter to the currents of his age in their lack of idealism, absence of sentimentality, and almost wilful flouting of conventional moralism. His leading male characters were coarse or shady; his leading ladies dashing and far from virtuous; his outlook on society satiric to the point of cynicism.

The limited contemporary readership he enjoyed, Gash continued, some thought to have owed much to the illustrator of Surtees’ tales, John Leech. The mid-Victorians did not care for Surtees’ tongue-in-cheek portraits of Cockney grocer MFHs (John Jorrock), disreputable sporting chancers (Soapey Sponge and Facey Romford) and women with dubious morals (Lucy Glitters), nor for his unflattering portraits of the aristocracy (the Duke of Donkeyton, Lord Scamperdale) and gentry (Jawleyford). None of Surtees’ various heroes are gentlemen, nor can his women be described as ladies. Soapey Sponge, who stares and blurts and kicks his legs about in company,⁹ is vulgar in both appearance and manners. Most of Surtees’ characters are sartorial eyesores and their outrages in dress are lovingly described: Sponge’s single-breasted coat is kept together by a miniature snaffle rather than a button, his white-cord waistcoat ‘secured with foxes’ tusks and catgut loops, while a heavy curb chain, passing from one pocket to the other, raised the impression that there was a watch in one and a bunch of seals in the other’.¹⁰ Such hunting aristocrats who appear are shabby and eccentric. In Lord Scamperdale’s hunt ‘the horses were a good deal better bred than the men’, and his lordship is described as ‘stumpy, and clumsy, and ugly’, ‘a coarse, broad, barge-built sort of man’, with clothes to correspond. An eighth earl, he ‘looked like a drayman in scarlet’ in the field and at home dressed in ‘full suits of flaming large-check red-and-yellow tartan’.¹¹ Scamperdale spends £2,000 a year on hunting but is parsimonious to the extreme in every other area of his life, covering his furniture in brown holland and living with his servant Jack in bachelor squalor in three

⁷ See *Mr Facey Romford’s Hounds*, Chapters 35, 36; quotations at pp. 236, 316.

⁸ Watson, p. 186.

⁹ *Mr Sponge’s Sporting Tour*, p. 121.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 63.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 139.

roughly furnished rooms, dining on tripe or half-raw beefsteaks served with cold onion in a dish of water.¹²

Lord Scamperdale and his faithful Jack are today acknowledged as two of Surtees' most amusing creations. The episode in which they take it in turns to berate Sponge for riding over hounds is possibly the most quoted from the novels, and worth quoting again here:

His lordship ... pulling-to his horse, held up his hand, the usual signal for Jack to 'sing out' and stop the field. Sponge saw the signal, but unfortunately Hercules didn't; and tearing along with his head to the ground, resolutely bore our friend not only past his lordship, but right on to where the now stooping pack were barely feathering on the line.

Then Jack and his lordship sung out together.

'Hold hard'! screeched his lordship, in a dreadful state of excitement.

'HOLD HARD'! thundered Jack.

Sponge was holding hard – hard enough to split the horse's jaw, but the beast would go on, notwithstanding.

'By the powers, he's among 'em again'! shouted his lordship, as the resolute beast, with his upturned head almost pulled round to Sponge's knee, went staring on like the blind man in Regent Street. 'Sing out, Jack! sing out! For heaven's sake, sing out', shrieked his lordship, shutting his eyes, as he added, 'or he'll kill every man Jack of them'.

'Now, SUR'! roared Jack, 'can't you steer that 'ere aggravatin' quadruped of yours?

'Oh you pestilential son of a pontry-maid'! screeched his lordship, as Brilliant ran yelping away from under Sponge's horse's feet. 'Sing out, Jack! sing out'! gasped his lordship again.

'Oh, you scandalous, hypocritical, rusty-booted, numb-handed son of a puffing corn-cutter, why don't you turn your attention to feeding hens, cultivating cabbages, or making pantaloons for small folk, instead of killing hounds in this wholesale way'! roared Jack; an enquiry that set him foaming again.

'Oh, you unsightly, sanctified, idolatrous, Bagnigge-Wells coppersmith, you think because I'm a lord, and can't swear or use coarse language, that you may do as you like; rot you, sir, I'll present you with a testimonial! I'll settle a hundred a year upon you if you'll quit the country'.¹³

The Victorians were not amused: Surtees' death was not recorded in the press, 'a reflection of his failure to secure public recognition as a serious or even respectable author'.¹⁴ Success was only achieved with his final novel, *Facey Romford*; those published during his lifetime quietly sank out of sight. What is the

¹² See *ibid.*, Chapters 20 and 24; quotations at pp. 139, 181, 182.

¹³ *Ibid.*, p. 172.

¹⁴ *ODNB*.

explanation for this failure? ‘A rather obvious alienation of the public to whom it was intended to appeal’, wrote an early twentieth-century admirer. By the 1840s fox hunting had developed

into a magnificently conducted and highly exclusive cult. The M.F.H. was usually a landed proprietor, and as such ... a prominent figure in agriculture, politics, and local affairs. He was a leader as well as an employer. He united the social as well as the commercial sections of locality ... when [Surtees] laughed not *at* [Jorrocks] but only *with* him, the sense of social indiscretion was, for a considerable time, predominant.¹⁵

Surtees

exasperated and estranged the fox-hunting or country-house public by his failure to treat the whole social structure, from the landowner to the stable-boy, with reverence or sentiment ... It was felt, and justly felt, that, both in his democratic attitude towards railroads and fashionable hunting and in his mischievous portrayal of an aristocracy which could include a Scamperdale, he was an enemy within the camp.¹⁶

Such criticism was relatively short-lived: for subsequent generations the lack of snobbery in Surtees’ novels would prove one of their main attractions. By the 1930s the fact that Jorrocks ‘wanted to be an M.F.H. ... for sport, not for Society’ had become a virtue:

Surtees never jeered at honest worth. To him the gusto of the Cockney sportsman, associated as it was with many happy hunts in Surrey, was a reproach rather than a challenge to Leicestershire. So he invented a modest hunt in a new locality, and thus enabled its hero to evade tradition and the social structure.¹⁷

Surtees’ other anti-heroes, Sponge and Romford, may be cads and bounders, but they too pursue their deceptions for the love of sport rather than society. The impoverished Sponge imposes himself on a series of suffering hosts in order to hunt; Romford deliberately misrepresents his social status to hunt a pack of his own. Romford’s anguished endurance of ‘Society’ – dinner parties and balls in particular – to facilitate his hunting activities are among Surtees’ funniest descriptions.¹⁸

The beginnings of the cult of Surtees thus lie not in the nineteenth century but in the early twentieth. His literary reputation remains questionable: his range was

¹⁵ Watson, p. 69 (emphasis in the original).

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 236.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 70, 72.

¹⁸ See *Mr Facey Romford’s Hounds*, Chapters 33, 39 and 51–4.

limited, 'his style often clumsy and colloquial', the plots of even the better novels 'loose and discursive'. Surtees' 'proper place among Victorian novelists', Gash concludes, 'is not easy to determine'.¹⁹ But fox hunters continue to appreciate his descriptions of the hunting field and social historians now turn to him for period detail (dress, dinners). By the twentieth century his lack of idealism, absence of sentimentality and flouting of Victorian mores were no longer problematic. As we will see, the Surtees rehabilitation also owed much to nostalgia. The initial twentieth-century resurgence of interest in his novels came from men who had survived the First World War and looked back with wonder at a lost world. Fox hunting began to be associated with the England they had been fighting for – and Surtees became synonymous with fox hunting.

George Whyte-Melville (1821–1878)

While Surtees would ultimately triumph in terms of posthumous reputation, far more successful in the nineteenth century were the novels of George Whyte-Melville. Eton-educated and at one time a captain in the Coldstream Guards, Whyte-Melville later served in the Crimean War. Once that war was concluded he turned his attention to hunting and writing before being killed by a fall from his horse in the field. Whyte-Melville always considered himself an amateur writer, but he was a prolific one. His first, semi-autobiographical, novel, *Captain Digby Grand*, originally serialised in *Fraser's Magazine*, was published in book form in 1853; 25 more followed, ranging from romances such as *Holmby House* (1860) to tales rooted in his military and sporting experience. He also wrote poetry and 'The Good Grey Mare' would give a then new and now iconic sporting magazine its title: *Horse and Hound*. Founded in 1884 by the Hon. Wyndham Berkeley Portman, this 'journal of sport and agriculture' ran two lines of Whyte-Melville's original verse under its masthead: 'I freely admit that the best of my fun/I owe it to horse and hound'.

Whyte-Melville's principal hunting novel is *Market Harborough*, published in 1861. Surtees' novels are referenced throughout the book and there are some parallels in subject matter – the shady practices both of horse dealers and young ladies in the marriage market – but Whyte-Melville is a much more genteel read. His hero, John Standish Sawyer, is preoccupied with comporting himself well as a provincial visitor to the hunting shires. Standish Sawyer is no Sponge: he is naive rather than a disreputable cad, eminently more suitable to the Victorian drawing room than any of Surtees' creations, if in the long term he has failed to retain public interest. Where Surtees was satiric and irreverent, Whyte-Melville was earnest. He fawned on the aristocracy and gentry rather than making Guys of them, typically playing up the aristocratic connections of the sport while, like Hawkes earlier in the century, simultaneously championing its democratic aspects. In *Digby Grand*, for example, he wrote:

¹⁹ ODNB.

May we not ... congratulate ourselves that in this country, and, I believe, only in this country, we see the young aristocracy unflinchingly take their share of all the buffetings inseparable from our rough and athletic amusements with a manly good humour ...

Who is the foremost horseman in yon reckless crowd, all maddening for a start, in the enthusiasm of the chase? Who is the daring rider guiding that impetuous and untrained animal, with many a hairbreadth escape, over the intricacies of a strongly-enclosed country, and as he obtained it, still by sheer nerve and determination, keeping the lead? Not the professional rough-rider ... not the keen and skilful huntsman ... no, it is none of these, but some scion of nobility, some gentleman of name, brought up in all the habits of the highest refinement, nurtured in wealth, and cradled in luxury, but neither softened in frame nor dulled in courage by the enervating effects of idleness and vice. The same spirit pervades all classes of English society, a chain that links together the highest and the lowest of the land, that, promoting field sports, cricket, quoits, games, and gatherings, unites, in one manly bond the peer and the peasant, the merchant and the mechanic, gentle and simple, rich and poor. Long may it last! and so long shall our glorious country vindicate her right to the endearing appellation of Merry England.²⁰

In 1984 *Horse and Hound* honoured Whyte-Melville by choosing to mark its centenary with a reissue of *Market Harborough*. In his introduction the magazine's then editor, Michael Clayton, acknowledged changing public sentiment since Whyte-Melville's time and wrote with exasperation of 'the synthetic outcry from the shrill minority who attempt the abolition of foxhunting as a symbol of cruelty and class distinction – both charges totally unfair and inaccurate, but so open to misrepresentation is this sport to a modern society in which the majority have somewhat lost touch with the realities of rural life'.²¹

Anthony Trollope (1815–1882)

On purely literary rather than socio-historical grounds both Surtees and Whyte-Melville are minor footnotes. Not so their successor Anthony Trollope, who produced no hunting novel per se, embedded hunting in many, possibly 'too many' of his works: 'I have always felt myself deprived of a legitimate joy when the nature of the tale has not allowed me a hunting chapter'.²² Such chapters – a prime example in this regard may be found in 37–9 of *The Eustace Diamonds* (1873) – are rarely essential to the plot and as *The Penguin Companion to*

²⁰ George J. Whyte-Melville, *Digby Grand: An Autobiography* (London, 1900), pp. 214–15.

²¹ Clayton, 'Introduction', George J. Whyte-Melville, *Market Harborough; or, How Mr Sawyer went to the Shires* (London, 1984), p. xi.

²² Anthony Trollope, *An Autobiography* (2 vols, Edinburgh, 1883), vol. 1, p. 85.

Trollope advises, tongue in cheek, 'readers who dislike hunting may generally gallop through [them]', pausing only 'if an important character is killed during a hunt, as in *Randolph the Heir*' (1870–71).²³ Fox hunting does permeate his fiction, however, and Trollope returned in some of his later novels, notably *The American Senator* (1876–7) and *Marion Fay* (1881–2), to the debate over the morality of the sport initiated by Freeman's article in the *Fortnightly Review*. Surtees – whose surname Trollope gives to a curate in *The American Senator* – took the sport for granted in the 1840s. By Trollope's time, it required defence.

In Trollope's thirty-fourth novel the eponymous Republican senator, who hails from a fictitious western state, surveys and roundly condemns a variety of English institutions and pastimes. Fox hunting is just one of his targets, but Trollope puts into Elias Gotobed's mouth all of the arguments marshalled against the sport by the 1870s. Gotobed is the guest of John Morton, recently returned from America himself, and now squire of Bragton. Morton's great-grandfather had been master of the Rufford and Ufford hounds, for many years financing the hunt from his own pocket. By the time John Morton inherited it the hunt had become a popular subscription pack, with hounds housed elsewhere. Gotobed is amazed, however, by the former kennels: 'All that for dogs'! Nor could he understand the need for 50 couple: 'Wouldn't half a dozen do as well'?²⁴ The current master was not rich, nor did he make a profit from the hunt: 'If he could make a living out of it I should respect him ... though it's like knife-grinding or handling arsenic, – an unwholesome sort of profession'. When Lord Rufford and his party arrived he looked on 'with curious eyes, thinking that he had never in his life seen brought together a set of more useless human beings'.²⁵ He continued to plague Morton with questions and criticisms, and when a local ne'er-do-well was accused of the terrible crime of vulpicide, Gotobed takes up his cause. Why shouldn't Goarly, whose crops had already been damaged by Rufford's pheasants, poison foxes who might take his fowls, and why should he allow the hunt to ride over his land? Goarly 'was standing up for his rights, all alone, against the aristocracy and plutocracy of the county'.²⁶ Fox hunting, the senator had decided by the end of the day, was 'Just feudalism'!²⁷ But Goarly turns out to be a thoroughly bad specimen, as Gotobed eventually admits with disgust. And Lord Rufford, despite being a 'do-nothing legislator', 'in his kind is very much better than the poor man in his'.²⁸ Class criticisms of the sport thus dispatched, towards the end of the novel Trollope attacks the 'philanimalists', the 'small knot of self-anxious people' who cursed the sport of fox hunting for its cruelty and condemned its purpose: amusement.

²³ Richard Mullen with James Munson, *The Penguin Companion to Trollope* (London, 1996), p. 181.

²⁴ Anthony Trollope, *The American Senator* (Oxford, 1991), pp. 52, 53.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 57–8.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 103.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 125.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 197.

Recreation, Reginald Morton argues, ‘is as necessary to the world as clothes or food, and the providing of the one is as legitimate a business as the purveying of the other’.²⁹

Marion Fay returns to the morality of hunting in describing Lord Hampstead’s expensive amusements. Hampstead adores fox hunting while entertaining ‘a vehement hostility against all other sports’. The young aristocrat was never to be seen on a racecourse; shooting and the preservation of game were ‘hateful to him’; fishing he finds unspeakably cruel. Fox hunting, by contrast, he lauds on a variety of grounds, the first of which is democracy:

The fox was not preserved by law, and when preserved was used for the advantage of all who chose to be present at the amusement. One man in one day would shoot fifty pheasants which had eaten up the food of half-a-dozen human beings. One fox afforded in one day amusement to two hundred sportsmen ... it was the public nature of the one amusement and the thoroughly private nature of the other which chiefly affected him. In the hunting field the farmer’s son, if he had a pony, or the butcher boy out of town, could come and take his part, and if the butcher boy could go ahead and keep his place while the man with a red coat and pink boots and with two horses fell behind, the butcher boy would have the best of it, and mind the displeasure of no one. And the laws, too, by which hunting is governed ... are thoroughly democratic in their nature ... It was simply in compliance with opinion that the lands of all men are open to be ridden over by the men of the hunt. In compliance with opinion foxes are preserved. In compliance with opinion coverts are drawn by this or the other pack of hounds. The Legislature had not stepped in to defile the statute book by bylaws made in favour of the amusements of the rich. If injury were done, the ordinary laws of the country were open to the injured party. Anything in hunting that had grown to be beyond the reach of the law had become so by the force of popular opinion.³⁰

When challenged to the effect that fox hunting was as cruel as fishing Lord Hampstead becomes ‘eloquent and argumentive’:

As far as we could judge from Nature the condition of the two animals during the process was very different. The salmon with the hook in its throat was in a position certainly not intended by Nature. The fox, using all its gifts to avoid an enemy, was employed exactly as Nature had enjoined ... he would grant that the fox did not enjoy the hunt. Let it be acknowledged – for the sake of the argument – that he was tortured by the hounds rather than elated by the triumphant success of his own manoeuvres. Lord Hampstead ‘ventured to say’ ... ‘that in the infliction of all pain the question as to cruelty or no cruelty was one of relative value’ ... Who can doubt that for a certain maximum of good a certain

²⁹ Ibid., pp. 504–5.

³⁰ Anthony Trollope, *Marion Fay* (London, 1997), p. 10.

minimum of suffering may be inflicted without a slur to humanity? In hunting, one fox was made to finish his triumphant career, perhaps prematurely, for the advantage of two hundred sportsmen. 'Ah, but only for their amusement'! would interpose some humanitarian averse equally to fishing and to hunting. Then his lordship would arise indignantly and would ask his opponent, whether what he called amusement was not as beneficial, as essential, as necessary to the world as even such material good things as bread and meat ... Man could exist no doubt without fox-hunting. So he could without butter, without wine, or other so-called necessities ... It was all a case of 'tanti', he said, and he said that the fox who had saved himself half a dozen times, and then died nobly on behalf of those who had been instrumental in preserving an existence for him, ought not to complain of the lot which Fate had provided for him among the animals of the earth.³¹

William Bromley-Davenport (1821–1884)

In the nineteenth century literary treatment of the sport of fox hunting was not limited to prose fiction but can be found in poetry as well. While fox hunting verse proliferated throughout the nineteenth century, one particular versifier, if not quite poet, exemplifies authors of the genre and as such is worthy of mention. William Bromley-Davenport's curriculum vitae mirrors that of the nineteenth-century Masters discussed in Chapter 2: Etonian as well as Meltonian, he enjoyed a stint at Christ Church, Oxford and subsequently became a Tory MP and colonel of the yeomanry. Bromley-Davenport's stanzas, noted Richard Greville Verney, nineteenth Baron Willoughby de Broke (1869–1923) with admiration, held 'spell-bound the attention of such a critical audience as a Bullingdon dinner-party ...'³² The arch-Conservative Willoughby de Broke's own CV was much the same: Eton College (1883–88), New College, Oxford (1888–92; third class in law), lieutenant in the Warwickshire yeomanry cavalry (1891–1910), MP for Rugby (1895–1900; he sat in the Lords from 1902). His entirely sympathetic commentary on this particular author, published in 1921, is as fascinating as the work of poet himself. Bromley-Davenport is best remembered for 'The Dream of an Old Meltonian' and 'Lowesby Hall', the parody of Alfred, Lord Tennyson's 'Locksley Hall' in which he gloomily predicted the state-mandated end of hunting. 'The Dream' describes the thoughts of an elderly Tory MP, bored with speeches in the House of Commons, who falls asleep and dreams of his true love: hunting: 'The Mace, and the Speaker, and House disappearing,/The leather-clad bench is a thorough-bred horse'. In 'Lowesby Hall' Bromley-Davenport wrote grumpily of the threats to his beloved sport. The latter poem, Willoughby de Broke reported, was 'political satire from the point of view of a Tory'.³³ Bromley-Davenport painted 'a picture of

³¹ Ibid., pp. 11–12.

³² *The Sport of Our Ancestors: Being a Collection of Prose and Verse Setting Forth the Sport of Fox-Hunting as They Knew It* (London, 1921), p. 87.

³³ Ibid., p. 91.

England when the Whigs and the prigs whom he hated so cordially had completed their handiwork'.³⁴ He 'introduces one after another of his pet aversions – money-lenders, pacifists, Cobdenites, plough countries, and plain women – and chastises them publicly'. The protagonist's tailor³⁵ is no longer willing to provide credit while 'cotton landlords' have turned

country gentlemen in patriotic throngs;
 Queen, religion, State abandoned, and the flags of party furled
 In the Government of Cobden, and the dotage of the world.
 The speaker gloomily predicts his unhappy future:
 I to hunt with fustian jackets, my remaining years to pass
 With the refuse of protection – in a land devoid of grass.

Willoughby de Broke was more sanguine about the future of fox hunting. Bromley-Davenport's nineteenth-century prediction that the sport would be abolished by the state had not yet come to pass and in his appreciation of the poet Willoughby de Broke wrote as if the attack on hunting were a thing of the past:

Such objection to field sports, particularly to Fox-hunting, as there may have been was probably political in part and in part humanitarian. Today it has no platform ... No humanitarian who is squeamish about field sports can expect a hearing until he has set forth his views on the condition of such countries as Russia and Ireland. There may have been at one time a sort of abstract political animosity to the whole idea of the Chase on the part of the heresy hunter with a mind tinctured by class feeling. Fox-hunting might appear to such a one to be a rudiment of a haughty and rapacious feudalism ... But the Sport of our Ancestors is in fact and in practice entirely national. If it were based on exclusiveness it would have deservedly perished long ago.³⁶

The Early Twentieth Century: John Masefield (1878–1967)

Willoughby de Broke's optimism regarding the future of fox hunting possibly owed a great deal to the public reception of a poem published two years before *The Sport of Our Ancestors* appeared. John Masefield's *Reynard the Fox* (1919), immediately and wildly popular, is far removed in spirit from Somerville's

³⁴ Ibid., p. 88.

³⁵ The illustration to the reproduction of the poem in *The Sport of Our Ancestors* is clearly anti-Semitic.

³⁶ Willoughby de Broke, pp. 88–9. The real danger to the sport Willoughby de Broke feared to be the possibility that it would become overly exclusive: 'there is one class of man', he argued, 'whom on every count it is most undesirable to exclude from the hunting-field. And that is the professional or business man from the country town ...' Ibid., p. 89.

The Chace, less bloodthirsty, more sentimental. And unlike the verse of Bromley-Davenport, which quickly became a minority taste, its literary reputation has survived. In terms of social history it also signals an important change in that, in its description of the hunting field, it looks to the past rather than describing the present. Surtees, Whyte-Melville, Trollope – all described hunting as a living, contemporary pastime, their work grounded in their own particular presents. Bromley-Davenport, although he might have feared the eventual end of his beloved sport, nonetheless wrote from contemporary experience. Masfield's post-war poem, by contrast, is set in the pre-war past.

Reynard falls into two halves, the first of which owes an acknowledged debt to Chaucer's Prologue: in it he describes some 70 members of the hunt. Masfield had read Chaucer, 'a well of English undefiled',³⁷ while working in New York before the war and lectured on him in America during the war itself. His own wide-ranging portrait of English society, like Chaucer's, is of the 'warts and all' variety but deeply affectionate. The novelist Muriel Spark commented that his 'panoramic record' was 'seen rather in the manner in which the painter Frith saw Derby Day and other gregarious aspects of his country':³⁸ there are fat and jolly clergymen; grim, resentful farmers; a liverish Major; and of course a 'fierce, hot, hard, old, stupid squire'. Women are now an accepted, indeed prominent, part of the field and appear in various guises, from enthusiastic little girls on fat ponies – who later in the century would become a staple of Thelwell's famous cartoons³⁹ – through stout, mannish women with red faces; bright young females who could 'do billiard tricks with corks and pennies,/ sing ragtime songs and win at tennis'; an embittered, grey-haired spinster; and Lucy Glitters reincarnated in the person of Sal Ridden. 'I had been thinking, for some time', Masfield wrote in 1960, 'of a peaceful theme that would show English society as a unity seemingly as complete as the unity of Chaucer's pilgrims'.

Perhaps the unity of those pilgrims was not very close at any time of the pilgrimage; but one purpose had brought them together, so that Chaucer could survey all the main branches of English life, and make each clear to us in the great Prologue of his design.

In 1919, no pilgrimage attracted our society, nor had we much incentive to unity: indeed, there seemed a plentiful incentive everywhere to rebellion, anarchy and disruption.

At the time, it seemed to me that only in the fox-hunt would the main branches of our society meet and mix actively together with good will and fellow feeling in a peaceful enterprise that might make a story.⁴⁰

³⁷ Constance Babington Smith, *John Masfield: A Life* (New York, 1978), p. 40.

³⁸ Muriel Spark, *John Masfield* (London, 1953), p. 155.

³⁹ Norman Thelwell (1923–2004); see, e.g., *Angels on Horseback* (London, 1957).

⁴⁰ LP record sleeve note, *A Fox's Day*, repr. in Philip W. Errington (ed.), *John Masfield, Reynard the Fox* (Manchester, 2008), p. 107.

Masefield, like Trollope, sought and found community in the field. Good will and fellow feeling abound in Masefield's 'pilgrims', many of whom – such as Peter Gurney or Hugh Colway – embody cherished conceptions of manly Englishness: 'kind to the core, brave, merry, true'. The huntsman is similarly praised for 'English character and mind'; the Master, a product of Empire who had fought in five wars, is described in much the same terms.

The first half of the poem thus celebrates the traditional, established, late Victorian social order. In the second half, however, which leaves the field to follow the hunted fox, Masefield demonstrates a new sensibility. His attitude towards the blood in blood sport again marks something of a transition in hunting literature: he celebrates the camaraderie of the hunt and describes fox hunting (twice) as a 'peaceful' activity, yet is sensitive to the suffering of its quarry. Writing in the early 1950s, Spark commented with perception:

There is ... no 'moral' to the story of *Reynard*. The Hunt meets and pursues the fox. The fox gets away; however, another fox is caught – an anonymous fox with whose fate the reader has not previously been involved. Hence, the fox which gets caught has no reality outside one fact, that it is caught; it is a fact the absence of which would leave the poem without its full catharsis, it would frustrate the purpose of the meet and render fruitless the careful delineation of each member. But Reynard the Fox who gets away – it is eminently just that he should escape. For should Reynard have been caught and killed after so many escapes, this would likewise impair the catharsis.

The poem is not a tract against fox-hunting, nor a piece of propaganda for fox-hunting.⁴¹

Spark is quite right. But subsequent commentators either found the lack of criticism troubling or took pains to emphasise Masefield's sympathy for the object of the hunt. In the 1930s, Frederick Watson took issue with Masefield's empathy for the fox, criticising him for imposing human sensibilities on the animal world: 'Mr Masefield imagines what he himself, with all his highly strung sense of anticipation, would feel like' in the fox's place.⁴² His first biographer, however,

⁴¹ Spark, p. 155.

⁴² Watson, p. 186. It is worth noting that in his children's novel *The Midnight Folk* (1927) Masefield demonstrated less sentimentality, and less of the new tendency towards anthropomorphism, than other early twentieth century writers. The bachelor quarters of Mr Rollicum Bitem Lightfoot, another literary fox, are far less humanly domesticated than those, say, of Kenneth Grahame's Mole or Ratty or Mr Badger. Where the Badger's kitchen is a human one, with 'spotless plates' on a dresser, an armchair and settles by a fire, and bundles of herbs, onions and baskets of eggs hanging from the ceiling, the passage to Bitem's chambers is littered with rabbit skins and feathers and there is 'a bit of duck' under the floor. *The Wind in the Willows* (1908; Dorking, 2007), p. 63; *The Midnight Folk* (New York, 2007), p. 23. At the end of the story Bitem, like Reynard, is allowed to live, Kay

Constance Babington Smith, whose *John Masefield* was published in 1978, devotes little space to the poem and wonders why Masefield 'chose to write with such enthusiasm about a fox-hunt, when his compassionate nature must surely have restrained him. He was not in the least a "fox-hunting man"''.⁴³ She acknowledges that he found the sport thrilling but continues that 'on a more rational level' he recognised that fox hunting was "'the passion of English country people, and into it they put the beauty and the fervour which the English put into all things when deeply roused.'"'⁴⁴ Babington Smith also emphasises that later in life, when he was living in the Cotswolds, Masefield 'had felt ill at ease with the hunting set; he had much more in common with the labourers who worked on their land'. That uneasiness, she claimed, turned to hatred when 'a hound belonging to the local hunt attacked and wounded one of his cats'. In *The Square Peg*, she argues, Masefield 'portrayed the men of the hunting set as stupid bigots and the women as hard-eyed viragoes'.⁴⁵ It is abundantly clear that Babington Smith preferred to think of her subject as someone who did not like hunting. More recently, Philip Errington has argued that Masefield's ambivalence towards the sport, 'and his conflict of attitudes towards hunting', 'may prove appealing to a modern audience'.⁴⁶

'A Deliciously Archaic Spectacle': Hunting and the Moderns

Despite its enormous success, *Reynard the Fox* can be seen as the last gasp of an adult literature that actively celebrated fox hunting. Even in Masefield's day the sport was beginning to be recognised as an anachronism, and writers began to puzzle over its survival. Subsequent invocations of the sport in twentieth-century fiction would take a decidedly different turn.

Perhaps surprisingly, hunting features in a variety of ways in the writing of Virginia Woolf. Woolf, apart from the odd day's beagling with her brothers when young, did not hunt, although she had a vague connection with the contemporary fox-hunting world via her brother-in-law, Clive Bell. Bell's family was a classic example of new money – his father was a colliery owner and mining engineer – aping an aristocratic lifestyle. Cleeve House, Seend, in Wiltshire was remodelled in 1897 along pseudo-Gothic lines and decorated with sporting memorabilia, while 'Squire' Bell 'encouraged his family to lead a "county" lifestyle', which included among other things a 'regular round of hunts'. His daughter-in-law Vanessa contemptuously dismissed her husband's sisters as possessed of an 'awful

Harker persuading the Master not to hunt in that particular fox's vicinity without asking him to refrain from fox hunting at all. Otter hunting, by contrast, has been stopped.

⁴³ Babington Smith, p. 180.

⁴⁴ Ibid., p. 181.

⁴⁵ Ibid., pp. 210–11.

⁴⁶ Errington, (ed.), 'Introduction', p. xi.

fox-hunting complacency'.⁴⁷ Virginia, who clearly shared Vanessa's perspective, provided a succinct dismissal of Cleeve in a letter to Violet Dickinson written in 1907: 'The thickness of this nib and the luxury of this paper will show you that I am in a rich and illiterate house, set in its own grounds, gothic, barbaric. I dip my pen into the hoof of an old hunter'.⁴⁸ That hoof would later appear in *The Waves* (1931), Bernard musing,

Now let me fill my mind with imaginary pictures. Let me suppose that I am asked to stay at Restover, King's Laughton, Station Langley three miles. I arrive in the dusk. In the courtyard of this shabby distinguished house there are two or three dogs, slinking, long-legged. There are faded rugs in the hall; a military gentleman smokes a pipe as he paces the terrace. The note is of distinguished poverty and military distinction. A hunter's hoof on the writing-table – a favourite horse ...⁴⁹

Her youthful, cheerful contempt notwithstanding, Woolf came to appreciate the hold that fox hunting had achieved in the English imagination. Thus in the second series of *The Common Reader* (1932) appears her article on Jack Mytton, which opens as follows:

Are you curious to know what sort of person your neighbour is in a deck-chair on Brighton pier? Watch, then, which column of The Times ... she reads first. Politics, presumably, or an article upon a temple in Jerusalem? Not a bit of it – she reads the sporting news. Yet one could have sworn, to look at her – boots, stockings, and all – that she was a public servant of some sort; with an Act of Parliament, a blue-book or two, and a frugal lunch of biscuits and bananas in her bag. If for a moment she basks on Brighton pier while Madame Rosalba, poised high on a platform above the sea, dives for coins or soup-plates it is only to refresh herself before renewing her attack upon the iniquities of our social system. Yet she begins by reading the sporting news.

Perhaps there is nothing so strange in it after all. The great English sports are pursued almost as fiercely by sedentary men who cannot sit a donkey, and by quiet women who cannot drown a mouse, as by the booted and spurred. They

⁴⁷ Frances Spalding, *Vanessa Bell* (London, 1983), pp. 67–8.

⁴⁸ Virginia Woolf, *The Flight of the Mind: The Letters of Virginia Woolf, Volume 1: 1888–1912* (London, 1975), p. 274. It was not merely hooves that were preserved: when Michael Clayton visited the tenth Duke of Beaufort at Badminton, they 'sat on yellowing horse hide covered chairs; the Duke remarked that his father had been accustomed to using the hide of some of his favourite hunters for this purpose: "He enjoyed sitting on them while they were alive, and he wanted to continue sitting on them thereafter."' Michael Clayton, *Endangered Species: Foxhunting – the history, the passion and the fight for survival* (London, 2004), p. 31.

⁴⁹ Virginia Woolf, *The Waves* (London, 1951), p. 67.

hunt in imagination. They follow the fortunes of the Berkeley, the Cattistock, the Quorn, and the Belvoir upon phantom hunters. They roll upon their lips the odd-sounding, beautifully crabbed English place-names – Humblebee, Doddles Hill, Caroline Bog, Winniats Brake. They imagine as they read (hanging to a strap in the Underground or propping the paper against a suburban teapot) now a 'slow, twisting hunt', now a 'brilliant gallop'. The rolling meadows are in their eyes; they hear the thunder and the whimper of horses and hounds; the shapely slopes of Leicestershire unfold before them, and in imagination they ride home again, when evening falls, soothed and satisfied, and watch the lights coming out in farmhouse windows.⁵⁰

Woolf also acknowledged the influence of hunting on English literature:

the English sporting writers ... make no mean reading. In their slapdash, gentlemanly way they have ridden their pens as boldly as they have ridden their horses. They have had their effect upon the language. This riding and tumbling, this being blown upon and rained upon and splashed from head to heels with mud, have worked themselves into the very texture of English prose and given it that leap and dash, that stripping of images from flying hedge and tossing tree which distinguish it not indeed above the French but so emphatically from it.⁵¹

There is no question that riding and blood sports affected Woolf's own prose. She was a keen observer of the countryside and country life and her diaries are peppered with a variety of sporting images and metaphors: conversations are described as 'starting hares', the anthropologist Brenda Seligman as having 'a poor wretched hunted hare face',⁵² while Woolf's writing process and progress are frequently compared to the galloping of a horse. Rereading *The Voyage Out* (1913) in 1920, and speaking of its author in the third person, she wrote, 'On the whole, I like the young woman's mind considerably. How gallantly she takes her fences ...' In 1924 she described herself as 'now galloping over Mrs Dalloway ...'⁵³

Sporting metaphors are also found in the novels themselves; thus, for example, Neville in *The Waves*: 'I am like a hound on the scent. I hunt from dawn to dusk'.⁵⁴ But Woolf also used hunting to place characters socially. Rachel Vinrace's

⁵⁰ Virginia Woolf, 'Jack Mytton', *The Common Reader*, 2nd series (New York, 1948), pp. 134–5.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, p. 135.

⁵² Virginia Woolf, *The Diary of Virginia Woolf*, 5 vols. (Harmondsworth, 1977–1985), vol. 1, p. 67; vol. 2, p. 180.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, vol. 2, p. 17; vol. 2, p. 323. In 1919 she similarly wrote about her diary itself, 'am much struck by the rapid haphazard gallop at which it swings along, sometimes indeed jerking almost intolerably', in this instance, however, its progress was 'over the cobbles'. Vol. 1, p. 233.

⁵⁴ Woolf, *The Waves*, p. 110.

betrothed, the writer Terence Hewet (modelled to some extent on Clive Bell) in *The Voyage Out*, asked to provide a brief biographical sketch of himself, stated, ‘I am the son of an English gentleman ... My father was a fox-hunting squire. He died when I was ten in the hunting field. I can remember his body coming home on a shutter I suppose, just as I was going down to tea ...’⁵⁵ *Jacob’s Room* (1922) contains a very traditional description of a hunt, with prose echoes of Masefield. Jacob gallops over the fields of Essex and then joins a cast of rustics for a smoke.⁵⁶ But the tellingly named Jacob Flanders is killed in the Great War, and hunting belongs to the world that died in that war.

In the early decades of the twentieth century fox hunting effectively became a form of shorthand used to reference tradition and a vanished world. In Woolf’s novels it is most firmly associated not just with Jacob but Percival in *The Waves*, both characters based on her elder, conservative brother Thoby, who died of typhus in 1906.⁵⁷ Hunting had become symbolic of England’s past. A church described by moonlight in *Jacob’s Room*, with a fox stealing out from the gorse bushes in the churchyard, strains to hold 500 years of history, ‘the ploughmen, the carpenters, the fox-hunting gentlemen and the farmers smelling of mud and brandy’.⁵⁸

Most of these post-First World War portraits, even when affectionate or nostalgic, also tacitly attribute to the sport an element of barbarism. Colonial, Australian, Louis in *The Waves* feels marginalised at school by English boys boasting, ‘My uncle is the best shot in England. My cousin is Master of Foxhounds’. He longs to be one of them. But he also recognises that the boasting boys he so worships ‘leave butterflies trembling with their wings pinched off; they throw dirty pocket-handkerchiefs clotted with blood screwed up into corners.

⁵⁵ Virginia Woolf, *The Voyage Out* (London, 1978), p. 142. The same image was later used in a short story titled ‘The Shooting Party’, first published in 1938. Two elderly sisters sit reminiscing about family as they wait for their brother to come in for dinner: “‘And John ...’ said Miss Antonia. “The mare, they said, put her foot in a hole. Died in the field. The hunt rode over him. He came home, too, on a shutter ...”’ *The Complete Shorter Fiction of Virginia Woolf*, rev. ed. (London, 1989), p. 258. Blood sports are also identified firmly in this story with the brutal past. When the brother, yet another bad-tempered squire, arrives home from a day’s shooting his dogs seize and maul the sisters’ little spaniel: ‘The Squire swung a leather knotted tawse this way, that way ... With one lash he curled to the ground the vase of chrysanthemums. Another caught Miss Rashleigh on the cheek. The old woman staggered backwards. She fell against the mantlepiece. Her stick striking wildly, struck the shield above the fireplace. She fell with a thud upon the ashes. The shield of the Rashleighs crashed from the wall ... she lay buried ... And then King Edward in the silver frame slid, toppled and fell too’. *Ibid.*, p. 260.

⁵⁶ Virginia Woolf, *Jacob’s Room* (London, 1976), pp. 97–8.

⁵⁷ Woolf’s contemporary E.M. Forster similarly employed this shorthand: Margaret Schlegel, in *Howards End* (1910), describes the wedding of her fiancé’s daughter as a ‘blend of Sunday church and fox-hunting’ (London, 1983), p. 221.

⁵⁸ Woolf, *Jacob’s Room*, p. 129.

They make little boys sob in dark passages'.⁵⁹ These little sportsmen are Henry Salt's 'savages'. If affection for hunting lingered, a new unease is also discernible on both social and animal welfare grounds.

By mid-century even Nancy Mitford, who loved hunting, demonstrated sensitivity both to the cruelty of the natural world and the suffering inflicted on animals by humans: it was 'intolerable that animals should have to lead such tormented lives and tortured deaths'.⁶⁰ In her semi-autobiographical novels, *Love in a Cold Climate* (1945) and *The Pursuit of Love* (1949), hunting is no longer Somervile's 'war without the guilt'. It has instead become a thoroughly guilty pleasure, involving participants in a moral dilemma:

The Radletts loved animals, they loved foxes, they risked dreadful beatings in order to unstop their earths, they read and cried and rejoiced over Reynard the Fox, in summer they got up at four to go and see the cubs playing in the pale-green light of the woods; nevertheless, more than anything in the world, they loved hunting. It was in their blood and bones ... and nothing could eradicate it, though we knew it for a kind of original sin.⁶¹

The barbarism of the traditional hunting classes is also made clear, albeit cheerfully and with humour. Matthew Radlett is yet another fierce Tory squire and when not fox hunting hunts his (entirely willing) children with four bloodhounds, to the great horror of his neighbours.⁶²

Savagery is even more apparent in the fiction of Evelyn Waugh. In *Brideshead Revisited* (1945), Samgrass refers to a lawn meet of the Marchmain hounds benignly as 'a deliciously archaic spectacle'.⁶³ But the hunting scene in Waugh's earlier novel, *A Handful of Dust* (1934), is positively brutal: long gone is the cheerful mockery of Surtees, the affectionate celebration of Trollope or Masfield's invocation of English community. Members of the Pigstanton, who hunt Tony Last's Hetton estate, despise each other as well as hating strangers and are 'united only in their dislike' for their 'timid, inconspicuous' Master. That unfortunate man rarely keeps in sight of hounds and is frequently lost by the end of the day, his sole enjoyment in the sport consisting of being able to refer to his position in business

⁵⁹ Woolf, *The Waves*, pp. 25 and 39.

⁶⁰ Nancy Mitford, *The Pursuit of Love* (Harmondsworth, 1980), p. 20.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, p. 31 (emphasis added). This passion lasted throughout the Mitfords' lives. When Nancy lay on her deathbed her younger sister Deborah asked if there were anything she could do. "No, nothing," she said. "I just wish I could have one more day's hunting". Deborah Devonshire, *Wait for Me! Memoirs of the Youngest Mitford Sister* (London, 2010), p. 319. Deborah hung photographs of headless chicken corpses in the Farmyard at Chatsworth to show visiting children the proclivities of the fox. *Ibid.*, p. 291.

⁶² *Ibid.*, p. 14.

⁶³ Evelyn Waugh, *Brideshead Revisited* (London, 1988), p. 120.

meetings.⁶⁴ Last doesn't hunt himself but his six-year-old son, John Andrew, is given a pony who he names Thunderclap on the recommendation of a groom who had known a horse of that name. The original Thunderclap had killed two of his riders before staking himself in the guts and having to be shot.⁶⁵ John Andrew's own first day out with the Pigstanton likewise ends in tragedy: the little boy is kicked in the head by another horse and dies in a ditch.

An even more shocking, albeit facetious, brutality colours a portrait of fox hunters in 'Esme', a short story published some years earlier by 'Saki', the pen name of Hector Hugh Munro.⁶⁶ The narrator and her 'strapping, florid' friend Constance, having lost the hunt, meet up with a few couple of hounds who have rioted, following the scent not of the fox but of a hyena escaped from a local aristocrat's park. The hounds soon return to their pack; the hyena follows the two women on horseback. To their consternation, it seizes 'a small half-naked gipsy brat' out blackberrying, canters for a while happily in front of them, the wailing child gripped firmly in its jaws, then bounds with the child into thick shrubs: 'the wail rose to a shriek and then stopped altogether'. 'Constance shuddered. "Do you think the poor little thing suffered much?" ... "The indications were all that way ... on the other hand, of course, it may have been crying from sheer temper. Children sometimes do."' ⁶⁷

The 'Pony Book'

At the same time that hunting was gradually disappearing from adult fiction, it was becoming a staple of a new form of sporting literature: the 'pony book'.⁶⁸ Ironically, this literature coincides roughly with Hugh Lofting's animal welfare-

⁶⁴ Evelyn Waugh, *A Handful of Dust* (Harmondsworth, 1951), pp. 99–100.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 19.

⁶⁶ For Saki see A.J. Langguth, *Saki: A Life of Hector Hugh Munro* (New York, 1981).

⁶⁷ 'Esme', in 'Saki' [H.H. Munro], *The Complete Works of Saki* (New York, 1976), p. 104.

⁶⁸ 'Pony books' tend not to feature in studies of children's literature. Clarissa Cridland provides a chatty, personal, but informative survey of writers who published between the 1920s and 1967, including a partial list of titles, in 'Pony Books: A Brief Introduction', originally published in *Folly Magazine*, vols. 7 (1992) and 8 (1993) and available online at <http://www.janebadgerbooks.co.uk/articles/clarissacridlandarticle.html>. While many of the books remained in print for decades (and some are now being revived by Edinburgh's Fidra Press), scant attention has been paid to the women who wrote them. The following discussion concentrates on the work of pre-Second World War pioneers and the particularly prolific and popular post-war authors. Those interested in following up the pony book literature will want to look as well at the work of Pat Smythe, Mary Gervaise, Judith Berrisford, Mary Treadgold and Patricia Leitch, among others. See also www.janebadgerbooks.co.uk and Jane Badger, *Heroines on Horseback: The Golden Age of the British Pony Book* (forthcoming).

oriented, anti-hunting Dolittle tales. The earliest date from the late 1920s and by the 1930s the genre was well-established, with books published by Muriel Wace as 'Golden Gorse', M.M. Oliver and E. Ducat, and Primrose Cumming. Both authorship and audience provide a marked contrast to the hunting literature of the nineteenth century: this new genre was dominated by female authors and read by children. Social satire has also been replaced by instruction in the field.

The pony book emerged just as the horse as transport was becoming eclipsed by the car, riding now a leisure activity rather than a necessity. Children, as we saw in Chapter 2, were being actively encouraged both to ride and to hunt. Muriel Wace's 1928 manual *The Young Rider* concluded with a short list of suggested reading that included Surtees, Whyte-Melville and Masefield.⁶⁹ But Wace herself was about to contribute to a new fiction targeting children with *Moorland Mousie* (1929).

Clarissa Cridland has described the plots of the pony books published prior to 1970 as falling into three types: 'those written by the pony itself, rarely found after World War II, books written from the point of view of the rider with little instruction in riding techniques, mostly written between 1936 and 1965, and, thirdly, books also written from the point of view of the rider but which taught far more (roughly from 1946 to 1965)'.⁷⁰ *Moorland Mousie* belongs to the first type, and obviously owes a great debt to Anna Sewell's *Black Beauty*. It too is told in the form of autobiography, in this case of an Exmoor pony, and its purpose is similarly didactic, instructing people how to take care of ponies and bring out the best in them. When the story opens, Mousie is a foal running wild on Exmoor with his mother, her sister, and a cousin. They are visited by another pony who has escaped from a vile, selfish child rider who never puts her horse's comfort before her own, before Mousie and cousin Tinkerbelle are themselves rounded up by humans. For the first few years things go well as their new owner is kind and patient, but when a headstrong Mousie throws his young rider he is sold to a butcher and condemned to drawing a cart. Carefully trained and looked after, he originally prospers in his new circumstances but with a change in carer is later abused, loses condition, suffers a fall, and is sold on to a greengrocer who does not properly care for the pony. During Mousie's trials and tribulations he hears similar tales of woe from other ponies. Ultimately, Mousie is repurchased and rehabilitated by his original owner and all live happily ever after.

In *Moorland Mousie* animal welfare, as opposed to horsemanship or sportsmanship, is the primary focus – but the welfare in question is that of the horse and the book is very much the product of an animal-loving sportsman or in this case, woman. Hunting is introduced almost immediately in the story: Mousie witnesses a stag hunt as a foal and finds it absolutely thrilling, while his young

⁶⁹ [Muriel Wace], *The Young Rider*, 6th ed. (London, 1942), p. 164.

⁷⁰ Cridland.

cousin Tinkerbelle declares his ambition to ‘be a hunter’.⁷¹ The children to whom Mousie is restored at the end of the book are fox hunters, and the pony’s ultimate challenge is to carry the timid youngest child into the field. In the final chapter Mousie triumphs: young master Jack overcomes his nerves and is awarded the fox’s mask. Mousie (‘King of the Ponies’!) and Jack, with his sister Patience and her pony, are the only ones present when hounds roll their fox over, other than the Master and the Whip.⁷²

In pony books more generally fox hunting is often presented as the ultimate test of a child’s riding skill. Primrose Cumming’s *Silver Snaffles* (1937) also ends with a hunt.⁷³ The heroine in this tale, like E. Nesbit’s children and subsequently those of C.S. Lewis, enters a magical world through a secret door. In this case, however, the magic world is a world of ponies who take turns teaching the little girl, who has no pony of her own, how to ride. The ponies are the equine equivalent of a human working class; all of them ‘were born to be riding ponies and horses and to go hunting, but in your world it is our lot to work in harness, either all our lives or for the latter part of them’. It is ‘a pony paradise’, but also a paradise for Jenny and the other children, since the ponies are matched with those ‘born with the love of ponies, but who have never had the chance to ride’.⁷⁴

Jenny’s tuition ends in a hunt, but in a bloodless one. The fox goes to ground (‘we never kill here’) before reappearing to deliver a speech:

‘Dear hounds, ponies and riders ... this has been an excellent day, and as we are all tired I am only going to say that hounds hunted beautifully, thanks to the Huntsman and Whip, and that both ponies and riders surpassed themselves in getting over country as they have done. I am sorry I can’t give my brush to the leading lady, but here is a memento from my earth.’

To Jenny’s excitement he held out to her a small object. She took it gratefully, a little, reddish, foxy-looking stone.

‘Good night, all good hunting people’, said the fox, going to earth again with a whisk of his white-tipped brush.

‘Good night’, said all the good hunting people to the fox.⁷⁵

In Oliver and Ducat’s *The Ponies of Bunts* (1933), the child protagonists’ abilities and character are likewise tested in a day with the local hounds, in which

⁷¹ [Muriel Wace], *Moorland Mousie* (London, 1929), p. 15. For the description of the hunt see pp. 14–15.

⁷² *Ibid.*, p. 126.

⁷³ For a brief biography of Cumming see the recent reissue of *Silver Snaffles* (Edinburgh, 2007), pp. i–ix.

⁷⁴ Cumming, *Silver Snaffles*, p. 118.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 129–31. The hunt in the penultimate chapter of Cumming’s *The Wednesday Pony* (London, 1939) likewise ends bloodlessly, ‘after hounds had marked their fox to ground’ (p. 162).

a hunt takes place in the real world and ends with a real kill. When one boy's bridle breaks another, with whom he has been at loggerheads for most of the book, and to whom the lessons of sportsmanship came slowly, rides back and helps him to fix it with a bit of string. The boys are then rewarded not only by catching up with the huntsman, the rest of the field far behind, but in being able to give his recalcitrant horse a lead over a wide stream. They return home with both brush and mask.⁷⁶

Post-war Pony Books

In the pony books that proliferated after the Second World War ponies themselves were silenced and the focus was increasingly placed on equitation rather than animal welfare. Hunting, however, continued to be an accepted part of the world described. Among the most popular authors at this time were Ruby Ferguson (1899–1966) – 'the Enid Blyton or Elinor Brent-Dyer of pony stories'⁷⁷ – and the Pullein-Thompson sisters, Christine (1925–2005),⁷⁸ her twin Diana and their sister Josephine.⁷⁹ Ferguson's series of pony books, originally published between 1949 and 1962, chronicle the horsey adventures of a rather brash and not entirely likeable young girl named Jill. These stories tend to climax in the show-jumping ring rather than the hunting field; in the sole description of a hunt the meet in question is of the 'crack' variety, with children like Jill only allowed to follow 'at a respectful distance'.⁸⁰ But Jill's stated ambition is nonetheless to grow up to be an MFH, she reads *Horse and Hound*, she and her horsey girlfriends sing *John Peel*,⁸¹ and in the show ring she occasionally comes up against competitors who 'hunted three days a week in winter'.⁸²

Hunting plays a more prominent role in the work of the most prolific of the post-war pony novelists, the Pullein-Thompsons. The girls' mother was herself a writer whose works included a trilogy of pony books,⁸³ and the three sisters' first publication was a joint one, *It Began with Picotee* (1946). But they soon branched out to write reams of individual novels that sold in the millions. Christine's total output was over a hundred books, roughly two-thirds of which related to horses.

⁷⁶ Marjorie Mary Oliver and Eva Ducat, *The Ponies of Bunts and the Adventures of the Children Who Rode Them* (London, 1933), p. 166.

⁷⁷ Cridland. Christine Pullein-Thompson's obituary in *The Telegraph*, 12 December 2005, similarly described her as the Enid Blyton of pony books.

⁷⁸ For another obituary see *The Independent*, 7 December 2005.

⁷⁹ Haymonds published a biographical study, 'Searching for Ruby', in the *Children's Book History Society Newsletter* (2001); a brief biography is also available on the Persephone Books website: www.persephonebooks.co.uk/pages/authors/ruby_ferguson.htm.

⁸⁰ Ruby Ferguson, *Jill Has Two Ponies* (London, 1952), Chapter 6.

⁸¹ Ruby Ferguson, *Jill's Pony Trek* (1962; London, 1972), p. 105.

⁸² Ruby Ferguson, *Rosettes for Jill* (1957; London, 1973), p. 146.

⁸³ Joanna Cannan, *A Pony for Jean* (London, 1936); *Another Pony for Jean* (London, 1938); *More Ponies for Jean* (London, 1943).

These books are now most decidedly period pieces and in a memoir published in 1996 the sisters reflected on the profound change in sensibilities which took place in their lifetime. Repeated mention is made by all three of the unsentimental realities of both animal and human life in the England of their childhood: ‘one accepted brutality in a way one wouldn’t today. Dogs were beaten, kittens drowned, chickens’ necks wrung; these were everyday occurrences’.⁸⁴ In the 1930s, Josephine wrote, ‘old horrors lingered and new ones appeared. Dogs could still spend their lives chained to damp kennels, but the first battery hen houses were being erected’. And not only the animal kingdom suffered: ‘Rheumatically farm labourers’, she continued, ‘lived without electricity, baths or indoor lavatories; in the winter their bent figures moved across the sodden landscape cloaked against the weather with sacks ...’.⁸⁵

Their country experiences informed the girls’ attitudes towards fox hunting. All three hunted and Christine at one stage acted as whipper-in. Joanna Cannan, who as a child had hunted (side-saddle) one day per season with the Bicester, sent her daughters beagling – which is conducted on foot – to experience hunting from the horse’s point of view. Christine gave no thought to the quarry until presented with a pad after a kill, and although it made her ‘melancholy’ the rest of the family were pleased with the trophy. Her mother had the hare’s paw preserved and mounted on a wooden plaque with the girls’ names recorded beneath it.⁸⁶ Fox hunting Christine found more exciting: ‘we loved the sound of the horn, the cry of hounds, the thundering of hoofs, a distant holler’.⁸⁷ Tradition was modified by modernity as she and her sisters not only rode astride but adopted the Italian or forward seat rather than sitting well back over fences. Qualms about the alleged cruelty of the kill were early laid to rest by the fox’s own proclivities as a hunter and the slaughter of a favourite hen cited as justification.⁸⁸

Blooded and given the brush of a dead fox aged nine or ten, Christine soon became an addict. Of the three sisters, it was she who wrote most explicitly of hunting, producing a trilogy centred on teenagers who form their own pack of hounds as well as a novel that tells of the experience of a day’s hunt via a variety of characters. *We Hunted Hounds*, *I Carried the Horn* and *Goodbye to Hounds* were originally published between 1949 and 1952, *A Day to Go Hunting* in 1956. The trilogy tells the story of a group of young people from two families, the Dashfords and the Days, aged seven through seventeen when their adventures begin. *We Hunted Hounds* recounts their trials and tribulations in acquiring and hunting a small pack; *I Carried the Horn* tells of the efforts of the Chill Valley Hunt to

⁸⁴ Josephine, Diana and Christine Pulein-Thompson, *Fair Girls and Grey Horses: Memories of a Country Childhood* (London, 1997), p. 62.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 132.

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 119.

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 120.

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 39.

cement their reputation as a bona fide hunt; in the final volume the future of the hunt is threatened by the sale of the Days' farm.

In these novels the morality of hunting is never explicitly addressed and the sole criticism of the children's activities is based upon their age and inexperience.⁸⁹ Hunt saboteurs have not yet appeared and the fox is firmly and repeatedly identified as a killer itself. A neighbour is only too keen to have the Chill Valley foxhounds hunt his land as a 'perfectly frightful fox' was robbing him and his neighbours of lambs as well as chickens.⁹⁰ The echoes of Somerville are unmistakable and Pullein-Thompson does not shrink from describing the kill in the final hunt of the first novel. But there is no savage, Surteesian who-hooping in her account. She is careful instead to stress that this fox deserved it and, presumably answering 'welfare of the fox' concerns that haven't been voiced in the novel itself, that death came quickly. Kate regrets the kill of an animal which had given the children such a wonderful run, but hounds rolled him over and dispatched him with a single nip on the back of his neck.⁹¹ Andrew, the huntsman, reminds her of the fox's alternative fate: being shot and dying of gangrene. The importance of the kill – of the blood in blood sport – is equally emphasised as he encourages his hounds to take an interest in the corpse. 'You'll find it makes all the difference in the world to your hounds', comments one farmer. 'It's wonderful the way a kill heartens them'.⁹² It is the kill, moreover, that wins over the hunt's critics. With it the Chill Valley Hunt ceased to be a children's scratch pack and won respect.⁹³

As Christine noted ruefully in the 1996 memoir, these stories would now be unpublishable: the trilogy 'is of course unacceptable today'.⁹⁴ Casual references to hunting commonplaces, including the horse flesh required to feed hounds, would repel many readers.⁹⁵ Three of the Chill Valley Hunt's new hounds are acknowledged as 'cur dog hunters'. One killed a Pekinese when out on exercise ('of course, it caused the dickens of a row; we had the police round here and goodness knows what'); the other had 'only a Corgi to their credit'.⁹⁶ Equally unsentimental reference is made to the effect that hounds which consistently riot (i.e., divert their attention to hunt animals other than the fox) are destroyed, just as hounds past their physical prime are destroyed.⁹⁷ Thunder, an elderly hound in *A Day to Go Hunting*, meets with an alternative fate, struck and killed on the road

⁸⁹ Christine Pullein-Thompson, *We Hunted Hounds* (London, 1949), p. 154.

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 162.

⁹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 184.

⁹² *Ibid.*, pp. 185, 186.

⁹³ *Ibid.*, p. 190. See also Christine Pullein-Thompson, *I Carried the Horn* (1951; London, 1958), p. 26.

⁹⁴ Pullein-Thompson, *Fair Girls and Grey Horses*, p. 121.

⁹⁵ See *We Hunted Hounds*, p. 40.

⁹⁶ *I Carried the Horn*, pp. 37–8.

⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 82–3.

by a lorry, an event not only described in the text but illustrated as well ('He was quite dead').

The Chill Valley Hunt trilogy and the stand-alone *A Day to Go Hunting*, as much as the novels of Surtees, reflect a world and social values which no longer exist. The huntsman has a portrait of Queen Victoria and Prince Albert above his chimney piece and the skins of dead hounds serve as rugs.⁹⁸ Even the names of the Days' horses, Mulligatawny and Pink Gin, are redolent of a vanished age. Given their popularity, however, the books were not only reprinted into the 1970s, but revised and reissued beginning in 1990 – not entirely successfully, and to rather odd effect. Some cuts from the original text appear to have been made simply for length, or to eliminate repetition, and some of the revisions are fairly mechanical. In the 1990 edition of *We Hunted Hounds*, first published in 1949, for example, references to money have been adjusted to reflect both decimalisation and inflation; 'landrover' has been substituted for 'Ford brake', 'word processor' for 'typewriter', 'homework' for 'prep', and 'cheerful' for 'gay'. Anachronisms such as oil lamps and the wearing of bowler hats by the field have been eliminated and the huntsman and whips wear 'hard hats' rather than 'crash caps'. In the 1990 edition Sandy puts on a fluorescent jacket to go for an early morning ride.⁹⁹ Political correctness has also crept in, in that references to cigarettes, or to the children enjoying the occasional glass of wine with dinner, have been excised.¹⁰⁰ On the animal welfare front, Laurence, who wants to be an MP when he grows up, declares in the original edition that he will put through a bill to abolish docking (the removal of horses' tails); in the 1990 revision his aspiration is to 'stop export of live horses for meat'. In both versions, however, he insists he will be 'hunting's greatest lawyer'.¹⁰¹

In the end the revised text, stripped of original details and awkwardly studded with late-twentieth-century signposts, succeeds only in creating a world that never existed on land or sea, neither 1949 nor 1990.¹⁰² This fact is tacitly acknowledged in the revision itself: where, in the 1949 edition, a letter to potential subscribers to the newly established hunt refers directly to 'the season 1947–1948', in the 1990 edition the season is left undated.¹⁰³ How could it be otherwise? The founding of a children's pack in 1990 would have been an unlikely activity, and no new

⁹⁸ Christine Pullein-Thompson, *A Day to Go Hunting* (1956; London, 1969), p. 149.

⁹⁹ *We Hunted Hounds* (London, 1990), p. 180. In the 1990 revision Colonel Hayward is allowed to retain his sporting prints and foxes' brushes but references to his tiger skins and masks and antlers have been deleted – for their links with imperialism? Compare p. 108 (1990) with p. 104 (1949).

¹⁰⁰ Ferguson's 'Jill' books suffered the same indignities.

¹⁰¹ See pp. 99 (1949) and 105 (1990).

¹⁰² Enid Blyton's Famous Five novels are in the process of a similar revamping 'to make the books more relevant to today's children'. 'Enid Blyton's Famous Five get 21st-century makeover', *The Guardian*, 23 July 2010.

¹⁰³ See pp. 25 and 23 respectively of the 1949 and 1990 editions.

writer of children's fiction by that date could have failed to address the anti-hunt movement.

Christine Pullein-Thompson did make a nod in the direction of 'antis' in *A Day to Go Hunting*. This tale of a disastrous day in the field (fog, rioting hounds, an injured horse and rider, a hound killed on the road), told from the perspective of a score of participants, introduces the 'anti-' element in the person of Miss Mockler, whose deer park is out of bounds to the local hunt. When hounds riot, enter the park and spend hours hunting her Japanese deer she threatens to shoot them and the Master worries about court action.¹⁰⁴ Miss Mockler, with her 'grey hair scraped into a bun ... gooseberry eyes and long artistic hands',¹⁰⁵ is presented as something of a crank. She is won round by a diplomatic visit from the Master (how, precisely, is not specified), and despite the various disasters no serious criticism is made of the activity of hunting. The day in question has merely been a bad day.

Where Christine Pullein-Thompson's pony books foreground the hunting world of the immediately post-Second World War period, a change in focus is exemplified by her sister Diana in *The Hermit's Horse* (1974). Diana was one of the pioneers of a new theme: rehabilitation of the maimed and the lame, both human and animal, rather than killing and competition. The 'Hermit', Patrick Piers, is a veteran of the Second World War, physically and mentally scarred by his experience as a prisoner in Singapore. His sister Hester sends him a horse to take him out of himself; the horse, a former show jumper soured by overwork, is likewise in need of rehabilitation, having descended by virtue of bad behaviour from the show ring to a riding school to a pony trekking centre which has been closed down by the RSPCA. 'Caesar' is in fact the horse with the bad reputation so frequently found in Surtees' novels, but he meets with a very different fate. The Hermit is too frail to ride Caesar himself and two neighbouring children befriend the recluse to gain access to it. The story contains by-now typical descriptions of schooling and the horse is eventually entered in a local show – but in this instance only to demonstrate that he could be brought back by patience and kindness. After jumping a clear round Caesar is withdrawn from the competition, his rider accepting third place rather than participating in the jump-off: 'we've achieved our goal, a spoiled horse reschooled', declares the Hermit to amused spectators.¹⁰⁶ Less typical still of earlier pony books, Matthew, the boy who has ridden Caesar, rejects a career with horses in favour of becoming a naturalist! Dotted with descriptions of birds and wildlife, this particular pony book must also be unique in its description of tidying a field in which to school the horse. It begins in a familiar fashion, with the children filling in rabbit holes, digging up tree stumps, cutting back brambles and trimming hedges on the perimeter, but continues, 'How many insects' homes had we destroyed? The old tree stumps had held a whole

¹⁰⁴ Ibid., pp. 62, 93.

¹⁰⁵ Ibid., p. 62.

¹⁰⁶ Diana Pullein-Thompson, *The Hermit's Horse* (London, 1974), p. 144.

community of little insects, running this way and that in alarm as the mattock struck. Where would they go now? Who else allowed stumps like these to break the smooth tidiness of well tended land’?¹⁰⁷ Animal welfare, the environment: these would become characteristic concerns of children’s literature in the 1970s.

Monica Dickens and the Return to Animal Welfare

The increased interest in the environment and animal welfare, and corresponding lack of interest in hunting or the show ring, is exemplified in the popular children’s books of another writer of the 1970s, Monica Dickens (1915–1992). Dickens, a great-granddaughter of the famous Charles, was not only or originally a children’s writer. Her first novels – *Mariana*, *One Pair of Hands*, *One Pair of Feet* – were rooted in autobiography and she went on to write many more novels for adults. In 1963, however, she published *Cobbler’s Dream*, a tale very much in the tradition of *Black Beauty* and *Moorland Mousie*. This novel focuses on an issue mentioned in passing in the first of Ruby Ferguson’s Jill’s adventures as well as in *Doctor Dolittle’s Circus*: the desire to provide a retirement refuge for ancient horses rather than selling them for their flesh.¹⁰⁸

The story opens with the death of a horse in a point-to-point. Beside the course is a refuge for horses to which the Cobbler’s Dream of the title, a show pony blinded by its arrogant young rider and about to be destroyed, is taken by its former groom. There he joins victims of both casual and vicious cruelty – the cruelty which had so exercised ‘Humanity’ Dick Martin in the previous century. The refuge had been established in the Victorian age, at a time in which horses were still a primary form of transport and tools of trade, and when ‘the underpaid carter, the street trader with his pony and barrow’ were unable to pay for medical treatment. The opening pages of Chapter 4, which detail the range of fates of working horses who became sick or ill in the nineteenth and the first half of the twentieth century – poleaxed in a knacker’s yard, literally worked to death, or ‘packed like sardines’ in the holds of ships bound for Belgium (the export of live horses for slaughter was not outlawed until 1950) – make for uncomfortable reading, as do the stories of a more deliberate cruelty: horses stolen and maimed for sport or pleasure, the victims of sickening neglect.¹⁰⁹ ‘There’s a queer hard streak’, says the ‘Animal Man’ from a local television programme, ‘a tradition of Midlands cruelty, that has never been broken. They’ve had it all: bull-baiting, bear-baiting, fighting cocks, cats skinned alive, crowds shrieking with joy as a dog and a monkey tore each other to bits’.¹¹⁰

¹⁰⁷ Ibid., p. 73.

¹⁰⁸ Ruby Ferguson, *Jill’s Gymkhana* (1949; London, 1970), p. 114; Hugh Lofting, *Doctor Dolittle’s Circus* (London, 1925), part 4, Chapters 7 and 8.

¹⁰⁹ Monica Dickens, *Cobbler’s Dream* (London, 1963). See, e.g., pp. 34, 100–108.

¹¹⁰ Ibid., p. 34.

While *Cobbler's Dream* was not itself a children's book, in the early 1970s this story, the details somewhat toned down, was turned into a highly popular children's television series, *Follyfoot*. Fox hunting, needless to say, does not feature in either the television show or the books – *Follyfoot* (1971), *Dora at Follyfoot* (1972) – Dickens was commissioned to write in accompaniment. In the original *Cobbler's Dream* Mrs Berry, one of the farm's benefactors, is convinced that the hideously ugly horse she rescued from the abattoir was a hunter rather than a carhorse, but only of draghounds: 'in her desire for Evremonde's glory, she had not forgotten the martyred fox'.¹¹¹

Dickens later went on to write a quartet of children's books devoted to the welfare theme, the House at World's End series, the first of which was published in 1970.¹¹² By the 1970s fictional horse-mad children, although not cast as hunt saboteurs, were no longer mimicking the adult Establishment and organising themselves into miniature hunts. Their independence of spirit was demonstrated instead via an opting out of conventional society.¹¹³ In these stories Carrie, like the protagonists of earlier pony books, is poor and horse-mad, but she and her siblings have different goals, rescuing animals no one else wants and hacking about the countryside rather than hunting. In the final volume Carrie and her animal rights champion friend Lester spend their holiday cleaning oil from seabirds.

Hunting features in none of the World's End stories, although Monica Dickens, pony-mad herself as a girl, hunted until 1951. Her autobiographical novel *Mariana* (1940) contains a lengthy description of a wonderful day out with hounds. But Dickens clearly hunted to ride, and the fox which had given such a splendid run goes to ground and cannot be dug out.¹¹⁴ Eleven years after that novel was published Dickens's horse shattered its femur during a hunt and had to be destroyed. She quickly bought another, but wrote in her autobiography,

I was finished with hunting ... I never should have started. People go out hunting for the excitement of the cross country ride, not because they want to kill foxes, and conveniently close their minds to the cruelty of the chase. Since I was always too far back to see a kill, it was Bow's death rather than the plight of the fox that opened my eyes to its horrors.¹¹⁵

¹¹¹ Ibid., p. 93.

¹¹² *The House at World's End* (London, 1970), *Summer at World's End* (London, 1971), *World's End in Winter* (London, 1972) and *Spring Comes to World's End* (London, 1973).

¹¹³ This trend was subsequently exemplified in the ending to Patricia Leitch's *Dream of Fair Horses* (1975) which, as Susanna Forrest notes, 'lifted the pony book out of its cosy, bounded, stable-yard existence, of gymkhana heroism and hunter-trial tribulations, and set it down in an altogether stranger, wilder and more open place'. *If Wishes were Horses: A Memoir of Equine Obsession* (London, 2012), p. 170.

¹¹⁴ Monica Dickens, *Mariana* (London, 1950), pp. 100–109.

¹¹⁵ Monica Dickens, *An Open Book* (London, 1978), p. 124.

In later years her English sporting friends thought Dickens's revised opinions about hunting and cruelty quite mad and attributed them to 'the change of life'.¹¹⁶

By the 1970s, when hunting was mentioned even in children's literature it was increasingly presented as a relic of a somewhat dubious and unsavoury past. Take, for example, John Christopher's famous futurist children's novel, *The Guardians* (1970). In Christopher's tale Britain has been strictly divided into 'Conurb' and 'County'. In Conurb, people live in tower blocks, eat processed food, work only 20 hours a week and are distracted by violent 'Games' on holovision, dance halls, amusement parks, bright lights and pop music. In County, separated by a wire fence, the gentry and a few commuting professionals (doctors, lawyers, government officials, factory executives) live a traditional rural life in villages and small towns; they employ servants and use horses for transportation, their walls are beautifully papered and hung with pictures rather than being 'plastisprayed in coloured patterns';¹¹⁷ there are real flowers in bowls and vases. The inhabitants of each world are largely content and thoroughly despise each other. Hunting, unsurprisingly, is part of life in County, and when young Rob illegally crosses the border from Conurb his protector Mike brings him two old, leatherbound books to amuse him in hiding. One relates to imperialism ('an account of life in primitive Africa in the late nineteenth or early twentieth century'),¹¹⁸ the other is *Mr Sponge's Sporting Tour*. 'Surtees is good, isn't he?' comments Mike, and assures Rob that people still hunt. Rob initially queries whether it is fair for a group of people on horseback to chase a single fox with a pack of hounds but, given a horse and taught to ride, he learns to enjoy hunting, despite being nauseated by the first kill and his ritual blooding. 'It was customary; and custom ruled all'.¹¹⁹ In County, Mike's mother explains, 'We have stopped the clock, taken it back even, to the time before the First World War'.¹²⁰ She invokes the pre-war world – Masfield's world – as 'a Golden Age', but in Christopher's telling that Golden Age is unnatural and built upon corrupt foundations.

*'Obtrusively carnivorous children'*¹²¹

By the 1970s a number of factors contributed to declining interest in the traditional pony book. Fox hunting was increasingly attacked as cruel: this was the decade in which the RSPCA finally declared itself against the sport and anti-hunt feeling generally became more widespread. Hunting could no longer be taken for granted

¹¹⁶ Ibid., p. 199.

¹¹⁷ John Christopher, *The Guardians* (Harmondsworth, 1973), p. 96. I'm grateful to Andrea McKenzie for bringing this work to my attention.

¹¹⁸ Ibid., p. 82.

¹¹⁹ Ibid., pp. 124–5.

¹²⁰ Ibid., p. 166.

¹²¹ Mary Cadogan and Patricia Craig, *You're a Brick, Angela!: A New Look at Girls' Fiction from 1839 to 1975* (London, 1976), p. 352.

as an activity; mere mention of it had now to acknowledge the anti-hunt brigade. But riding or owning a pony also came to be seen as 'posh', an elitist, suspect activity. Continuing to foreground the hunt in fiction would thus have been guaranteed to alienate at least a portion of any potential readership on either class or animal welfare grounds.

This change in attitude is reflected – and with a sledge hammer at that – in Mary Cadogan and Patricia Craig's 1976 study, *You're a Brick, Angela!* While the penultimate of 19 chapters is titled 'Swallows and Ponies', Cadogan and Craig can scarcely bare to consider either ponies or hunting. The books, and the world they describe, are condemned outright and dispatched within a few pages, Christine Pullein-Thompson coming under particular attack. The horse, Cadogan and Craig write,

has become a powerful symbol in girls' fiction, a central image in which snobism, display, the doctrine of kindness to animals are blended. Kindness to some animals, at least: a natural extension of the horse theme is the hunt theme, for which only the most facile moral justifications can be provided ... The thoroughly distasteful business of fox-hunting is presented with a characteristic bluntness, a hearty, outdoor disregard for its bloodier implications. [*I Carried the Horn*] ... is littered with bloody images ... The obtrusively carnivorous children live off meat sandwiches. Dialogue in the book is horribly authentic but its horror is social, it is bloody in the metaphorical sense and crudely funny, largely because humour was not the author's intention ... The children's attitude throughout is firmly backed up by that of their elders, aggressive unthinking country gentlemen who are preoccupied with tradition, stupid in a way which is too easily caricaturable ...¹²²

'Pony books on the whole', they conclude,

are bound to bore anyone who is not fascinated by ponies, they have also a built-in riling effect because of the exclusive nature of pony owning ... The inelegant costume, the out-jutting coat and fattening jodhpurs, have a style which is firmly rooted in tradition. It is not only the horse, however, which is affronted by the rider's whip hand. It is difficult for the uncommitted reader to dissociate any pony book from the absurd, exasperating connotations which the genre has acquired.¹²³

¹²² Cadogan and Craig, pp. 352–3.

¹²³ *Ibid.*, pp. 353–4. We are back to Alice Hayes's condemnation of female 'rotundity' as one of the arguments against women riding astride (see above, Chapter 2). Writing in the same year as Cadogan and Craig, Raymond Carr said that those who objected to women abandoning the side-saddle in the early twentieth century 'put the true case: any good-looking woman looks better riding side-saddle in skirts than astride. It was George Sand's appearance in breeches that allowed Ste Beuve to remark that she had the biggest bottom in France'. *English Fox Hunting: A History* (London, 1976), p. 175. Jane Ridley remarked

A less prejudiced reader would notice that the vast majority of English pony books are actually versions of a Cinderella story. Ruby Ferguson's Jill is the daughter of a penurious widow and struggles against the odds to acquire a pony, tack, clothes and riding lessons.¹²⁴ 'One of my favourite tropes in pony books', comments Susanna Forrest, 'was the moment when the heroine, like the beggar-maid princess at the end of the fairy story, is suddenly rewarded with an outfit befitting her virtues'.¹²⁵ Among the Pullein-Thompson sisters' heroines and heroes are a girl groom who rises above her original social station via talent and a boy who takes up riding to strengthen a leg weakened by polio.¹²⁶ 'Posh' people, or those who aspire to such status, are usually mocked and disparaged in these texts;¹²⁷ the 'Jills and Jackies' instead, 'in their patched-up jerseys and breeches that cost seven shillings and sixpence' were female role models, 'leaping all the obstacles in their paths and succeeding through good sportsmanship'.¹²⁸ However, the social politics of the 1970s condemned riding as elitist and hunting on animal welfare grounds, which meant that fox hunting, in the nineteenth century a staple of adult fiction, was in the late twentieth century disappearing even in children's literature. To be acceptable in that genre, hunting stories could no longer be set in the present. In literature, hunting had become history.

K.M. Peyton (1929–)

In strictly literary terms, the last extended incarnation of a hunting tale – K.M. Peyton's *Flambards* (1967), *The Edge of the Cloud* (1969) and *Flambards in Summer* (1969) – is arguably one of the best. Kathleen Peyton is a prolific author of children's fiction on a wide variety of topics and two of her novels, *Fly-By-Night* (1968) and *The Team* (1975), fall squarely within the more traditional pony book genre. Eleven-year-old Ruth Hollis longs for a pony, can barely afford one and has never ridden, but eventually triumphs over adversity and, albeit modestly, in the Pony Club Area Trials. But *Fly-By-Night* in particular, as the critics noted, 'is only marginally a pony-book. Bigger issues, personal and social, keep breaking in'.¹²⁹

similarly that riding side-saddle 'looked so much nicer. Hefty thighs were elegantly concealed ...' *Fox Hunting* (London, 1990), p. 155.

¹²⁴ See *Jill's Gymkhana*.

¹²⁵ Forrest, p. 41.

¹²⁶ See Diana Pullein-Thompson, *Janet Must Ride* (London, 1953); Josephine Pullein-Thompson, *Show-Jumping Secret* (London, 1955).

¹²⁷ June Cresswell in Josephine Pullein-Thompson's *Pony Club Team* (London, 1950) and *One Day Event* (London, 1954) is a good example. Despite expensive ponies and showing rosettes she's a poor rider, has no friends – and is rude to her mother.

¹²⁸ Forrest, p. 124.

¹²⁹ Marcus Crouch, *The Nesbit Tradition: The Children's Novel in England, 1945–1970* (London, 1972), p. 153.

The social issues which infiltrated *Fly-By-Night* and *The Team* dominate the Flambards tales. Like Masfield's *Reynard* the first two novels in the Flambards trilogy are set prior to the First World War, and they are 'literature' in a way that hunting fiction generally is not. The second novel, *The Edge of the Cloud*, won the Carnegie Medal and the trilogy as a whole was awarded the Guardian Prize for children's fiction. For present purposes, however, they are equally fascinating on two completely different grounds. First, they deliberately juxtapose the vanishing nineteenth-century world and the emerging world of modernity. Second, they introduce as fully-rounded characters in their own right the agricultural labourers and servant class so markedly absent in nineteenth-century novels. Their publication roughly contemporary with the emerging labour history of E.P. Thompson and others, Peyton's Flambards trilogy places class relations centre stage.

The heroine of these tales, Christina Parsons, sits at the uneasy midpoint between the traditional and the modern world. An orphan sent in 1908 to live with her Uncle Russell and two cousins, she learns to share Mark's love of hunting but gives her heart to his brother Will, who hates horses and dreams of flying. Flambards is decayed and slowly dying when she arrives: Uncle Russell has run the estate into the ground, spending money only on horses. The house is shabby and understaffed, its gardens overgrown. Only the stables are smart and clean. Uncle Russell is likewise a wreck, crippled years before in a hunting accident. No longer able to hunt himself, he spends his days drinking in front of the fire, waiting impatiently for his son to return with tales of the day's sport. Both Russell and his son Mark read nothing but *Baily's Hunting Directory*; they are arrogant, aggressive, ill-mannered and exercise 'the power of God' over their servants.¹³⁰ Russell is a brute, another incarnation of Masfield's

... fierce, hot, hard, old, stupid Squire,
With all his liver made of fire,
Small brain, great courage, mulish will.
The hearts in all his house stood still
When someone crossed the Squire's path.
For he was terrible in wrath,
And smashed whatever came to hand.¹³¹

In many ways, Peyton continues a well-established tradition of hunting fiction. The celebrated camaraderie of the fox hunt certainly reappears in *Flambards* as Christina is treated kindly at her first meet: 'For the first time since she had come to Flambards' she was 'in contact with her neighbours, and she rode home ... full of warmth for the experience'.¹³² And Peyton does not flinch from description of the outcome:

¹³⁰ Ibid., p. 142.

¹³¹ *Reynard the Fox*.

¹³² Ibid., p. 85.

The first fox was killed after a run of six miles, with several checks. Christina was glad not to see the final scuffle, which occurred on the other side of a bank in a scrub of willow osiers. She rode up in time to hear a thin, animal scream cut short. The huntsman came out of the scrub on foot, holding some scraps of mangled meat, and Dick rode forward and said something to him. He grinned, and came across to Christina and she was duly blooded. She shut her eyes, felt the warm, stinking blood on her face ...

When the huntsman gives her a pad, tying ‘the muddy little paw to her saddle’, Christina remembers ‘that it was an honour, a trophy’, but is revolted: ‘it was so wet and defeated’.¹³³ But her revulsion does not deter her from enthusiastic participation in future hunts.

There are echoes of Masfield rather than Trollope or Surtees in this description of the kill. Peyton breaks entirely new ground, however, in foregrounding and giving voice to figures markedly absent in the earlier literature. In his study of Surtees Frederick Watson commented,

Of the English farm labourer and the miserable conditions in which he lived until the present century Surtees says nothing whatever. However deplorable the domestic stringency of the small farmer, even his cattle were better housed than the English peasant, in whose two-roomed hovels large families lived out lives more degraded than those of savages. Without sanitation, adequate food, a living wage, fuel, or freedom, there was little to choose between child labour in the industrial system and the inner life of those ‘cottage homes of England’ ... No, it were better, perhaps, that Surtees discreetly omitted the farm labourer from his picture of the English countryside in Victorian days ... Surtees was a humorist, not a reformer.¹³⁴

The *Flambards* trilogy, by contrast, would include working-class people as primary characters. The second paragraph of the first novel opens,

A man hedging saw the fox break cover a hundred yards along and streak away over the adjoining pasture ... The man hedging sniffed, and rested on his billhook. In his leather jacket and muddy breeches he was invisible in the shadow of the hedge. He would watch and say nothing. ‘They’ll get no help from me,’ he was thinking, ‘Or as much as I get from them, which is the same thing. See all, say nowt.’ The thought gave him a nice satisfaction, to break the monotony of hedging from dawn till dark.¹³⁵

¹³³ Ibid., pp. 84–5.

¹³⁴ Watson, p. 115.

¹³⁵ Peyton, *Flambards*, p. 11.

The nameless hedger disappears from the narrative, but staff from the house and stables of Flambards – Mary the housekeeper, Violet the maid, Fowler the head groom and Dick the stable boy – do not. In fact, much of the plot turns on the havoc wreaked by the class system on Violet and Dick in particular, and the limitations imposed by it are addressed directly before real catastrophe ensues.¹³⁶ Dick, as William Russell acknowledges, is the superior horseman:

'Dick rides better than anybody', William said. 'It's a terrible waste.'

'What do you mean, a terrible waste?'

'Well, just being a servant. On hunting days he takes Mark's second horse, and meets him, and brings his first horse back. It's all hanging about, and getting cursed for not having the horse in the right place when it's wanted, and then riding back when everyone else is hunting. ... I jolly well bet Dick wouldn't half like to hunt, instead of waiting on old Mark.'

Christina was surprised, not having looked at it that way.

'I thought he liked his job.'

'Oh, yes, I dare say he likes it as much as any he could get. But when you think of it, it's a bit like being a horse yourself, having to do exactly as you're told.'

'Why, yes ...' Christina considered. 'But you have to, too', she ventured.

'Yes, now I do, curse it. But not when I'm a bit older. Then I shall do as I please. But Dick never will.'¹³⁷

William expounds on the same theory of equality later in the novel:

'We're all the same as each other, aren't we? ... It's only luck what we get born into. Flambards, or Buckingham Palace, or a pig-farm. It's only my luck that I don't have to work, and Dick's bad luck that he does have to. But we're just the same, as people.'

Christina was completely out of her depth, trying to follow.

'We all have our place. You say it's just luck—'

'Well, it's not brain. It should be, but it isn't. It's pure luck, whether you are born a slave, or a slave-driver.'

Christina laughed. 'You're talking pure rubbish. Who is a slave, for goodness' sake? Fowler! He loves working here. It's everything to him, all he wants.'

'Yes, it is to Fowler. He doesn't want much, after all. But take Dick. Have you seen the way he looks, sometimes, when Mark shouts at him? He knows that

¹³⁶ Dennis Butts astutely draws attention to echoes of the conclusion of E.M. Forster's *Howards End* (London, 1910) in that of the final volume of the Flambards trilogy. See 'Writers for Children: K.M. Peyton', *The Use of English*, 23 (Spring 1972): pp. 195–202. Christina's catastrophic influence on Dick's life might be seen as a variation on the Schlegel sisters' disastrous interaction with Leonard Bast.

¹³⁷ Peyton, *Flambards*, pp. 43–4.

he knows more than Mark, can ride as well as Mark and get more out of a horse than Mark. But Mark will always be able to tell Dick what to do. Why is that fair?’

‘If Dick doesn’t like it, he can always leave, and get another job. I don’t see anything unfair about it.’

‘It would be fair if Dick *could* leave and get another job. But if Dick wants another job he will have to get a good reference from Father or Mark. And if they don’t choose to give him one, what can he do? Why do you say he’s not a slave?’

‘Because he gets paid, and he likes the work.’

‘Do you know how much he gets paid?’

‘No.’

‘His wages are ten shillings a week. Out of that he pays rent and keeps his sick mother. The fact that he likes his work is the only bit of luck on his side, by my reckoning.’¹³⁸

Dick’s luck predictably runs out. Quietly in love with Christina, at 15 he is sacked for helping her save a lame hunter from the kennels. No one in the neighbourhood will risk Uncle Russell’s wrath in employing him and the gifted horseman eventually joins the army. His sister Mary is turned away after Mark gets her pregnant and she too leaves the neighbourhood. Their invalid mother dies in the workhouse.

John Byng, visiting the Duke of Bedford’s new kennels at Woburn, in 1794, had been struck by the contrast they presented to certain human habitation:

A fox-hound kennel ... consists of various well built buildings of brick, with strong good doors, and well tiled ... there is a kitchen, boilers, and coppers; – with separate apartments for the female hounds during their accouchments ... coals and straw are laid in, in great abundance for these hounds – nor is the most regular attendance or any kind of physic wanting for such hounds as are sick: Milk also is supplied in great abundance ...

The dog kennels for these noble animals proudly overtops those miserable mud hovels erected for the sons of Adam; who looking askance, with eyes of envy at the habitation of these happier hounds, regret their humanity and that they are not born foxhounds.¹³⁹

In the nineteenth century Whyte-Melville spent his literary earnings on philanthropic ventures that included the provision of reading rooms and recreation for grooms and stable boys, and Surtees too had evinced at least a twinge of social conscience. But these feelings are amplified in Peyton, although the contrast made is with the stables rather than the kennels. During one of her riding lessons with

¹³⁸ Ibid., pp. 91–2.

¹³⁹ John Byng, Viscount Torrington, *The Torrington Diaries* (4 vols, New York, 1970), vol. 4, p. 48.

Dick Christina had looked down on 'the frosted neck of the mare shining with her two hours' daily polishing. She thought of the spotless stables, and the great feeds the horses got, and wondered if Dick and the others lived in anything like the same luxury as the horses they cared for'.¹⁴⁰ After he is dismissed, she visits the dilapidated cottage where Dick lives and meets his bedridden, prematurely aged mother:

She had always thought the little village cottages picturesque, but there was nothing picturesque about the interior of this one, with its sagging, damp-stained ceiling and floor of broken flags. There was a rickety table and two hard chairs, no other furniture. There was no sink or tap, only a pail of water standing under the window, and a bowl on the floor with some dirty dishes in it. The walls were mildewed and dark with damp almost up to the ceiling, the whitewash clinging in wet flakes.¹⁴¹

Christina thought again

of the stables at Flambards, where the sick horses were given eggs and brandy, and the walls kept out the damp, the air was warm and fresh and everything shone. She thought of the new blanket on Goldwillow ... thick and bright with stripes of black and red on deep yellow. The blankets she looked at now were grey and threadbare. Dick's mother was less than a Flambards horse. Dick had always known it.¹⁴²

Peyton, as the reviewer of *Flambards* in the *Times Literary Supplement* noted, is a social historian as well as 'an accomplished story teller'.¹⁴³ Her narrative,

¹⁴⁰ Peyton, *Flambards*, p. 59.

¹⁴¹ *Ibid.*, p. 154.

¹⁴² *Ibid.*, p. 157.

¹⁴³ *TLS*, 30 November 1967, p. 1155. An isolated, though loud, dissenting voice in this regard is Dominic Hibberd, who made public his dissatisfaction with the Carnegie Medal selection committee's award for *The Edge of the Cloud*. Hibberd implied the trilogy was commercially driven ('Teenlit for OUP is big business'); he also compared Christina with Emma Woodhouse and found her wanting. A literary biographer of the First World War poets, he criticised Peyton for failing to let the war 'play its historical part' in her trilogy and for refusing to tackle 'urban problems'. The trilogy, he concluded, 'is not of any importance as an historical novel'. 'The Flambards Trilogy: Objections to a Winner', *Children's Literature in Education*, 3/2 (July 1972): pp. 5–15, quotations at pp. 6, 14. Colin Ray, chair of the committee, responded with admirable restraint, pointing out mildly that Peyton 'also fails to write a treatise on prewar economics' and 'changes in agricultural technology'. "'The Edge of the Cloud" – A Reply to Dominic Hibberd', *Children's Literature in Education*, 3/3 (November 1972): pp. 5–6, quotation at p. 5. He also explained that one of the criteria for the Carnegie award is a book's potential impact on the young reader: the present study provides proof of that impact.

however, is shot through with ambiguities, and as in *Reynard the Fox* there is no clear moral. For example, Russell's house is repeatedly compared to the infinitely more civilised house of a neighbour. In 1908 Flambards, 'a mid-Victorian pile', is already a physical as well as metaphorical ruin.¹⁴⁴ The wallpaper is faded, the china chipped, bedding and curtains in shreds. Two ancient smelly fox hounds shed white hairs in the cold front hall. The discomfort is different from that described by Surtees in detailing Scamperdale's spartan existence: Scamperdale's squalor is a matter of choice, Russell's is not. The money is gone, and Scamperdale's world a thing of the past. A contrast to Flambards is provided in Mr Dermot's house, described as it appeared in spring rather than the autumn: Dermot belongs to the future. He teaches William mathematics, how to drive a car, and to design and fly planes. The grass around his Georgian house 'was neatly mown and some early crocuses were showing through'.¹⁴⁵ Christina is

enchanted by everything she saw: the gleaming white interior of the austere house; pale, shining wood floors with rugs like jewels, and fine modern furniture. Everything was spacious, of a fastidious male taste, nothing unnecessary; there was no bric-à-brac nor ornamentation. There were books, in book-shelves from ceiling to floor, and sumptuous curtains of fantastic oriental colours.¹⁴⁶

Uncle Russell's 'lair', the dining room at Flambards, was also lined with books, but in his case Beckford's *Thoughts on Hunting*, *The Breeding of Foxhounds*, *Baily's Hunting Directory*, *Observations on Fox-hunting*, *The Essex Hounds*, *Goodall's Practice with Foxhounds*, and similar tomes. Leaving, Christina 'stood before the white front door, and ... looked into the shining, civilized house – and it seemed to her at that moment that it truly did shine, with kindness and reason and light. By contrast Flambards suddenly seemed all darkness, violence and ignorance'.¹⁴⁷ This same feeling returned a year or two on: 'Flambards', Christina said to the house, 'you are dying'. The house was 'decaying, with great dignity, ivy-bound, roses rampant, reverting to briar, brown panelling drying and cracking, stone flags breaking up, tiles slipping, chimneys smoking ... There was no future in Flambards'.¹⁴⁸ When William is thrown out of the house by his father the feeling that the house was doomed comes back to her, but without any touch of beauty in its decay,

now Flambards, choked in ivy, hemmed round by its wilderness, seemed to stand for everything that was backward and ignorant. She remembered Mr. Dermot's house, and how she had thought of it as shining. Nothing shone in

¹⁴⁴ Peyton, *Flambards*, p. 20.

¹⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 127.

¹⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 129.

¹⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 136.

¹⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 195.

Flambards. Christina felt that with William's going, she had been abandoned to the backwardness, the wilderness of Flambards.¹⁴⁹

When at the end of the novel, she must choose between William's and Mark's proposals, 'the unchanging peace of Flambards seemed beside William's offer the unchanging peace of a tomb'.¹⁵⁰ Mark represents the past, a past he cares passionately about:

I would go out and get killed, willingly, if I thought all this would never change. The old places ... the old way of life. This countryside – there's nowhere else in the world like England. You can keep your progress – Will's aeroplanes, for example. What good is all that rubbish? ... everything that is good and real is right under his nose all the time ... the old ways are best.¹⁵¹

Christina chooses Will and the future and is driven away by him in a Rolls Royce with Mark, in a rage, galloping alongside on a horse. 'Mrs Peyton', one reviewer noted, followed her heroine 'tenderly and with affection to the final breaking of the chains binding her to Flambards'.¹⁵²

The story, however, doesn't end there, and the chain has not in fact been broken. While modernity is neither castigated nor condemned, it is snuffed out with William's death in the Great War. Mr Dermot, who first taught him to fly, has already been killed in one of his prototype flying machines. It is Flambards, and not Dermot's shining house, that predominates in these stories and to which Christina returns after the war, when its decay is even more entrenched and its former occupants dead or dispersed. Christina, as William used to tease, is a 'hunting Russell', Flambards her home and, after a brief, predictably disastrous marriage to Dick, Mark is eventually her husband. The *Flambards* trilogy (and a fourth volume that followed in 1981)¹⁵³ is thus in many ways an exercise in nostalgia, just as *Reynard the Fox* was. The flaws and injustices of the vanished world are drawn with sensitivity and perception: the price for Mark's desired world was paid by Violet and Dick and their mother. But the social critique notwithstanding, Peyton's portrait of that world is ambiguous and conflicted, much in the same way that Masfield's portrait of hunting is conflicted. It is the anachronistic, decaying

¹⁴⁹ Ibid., p. 198.

¹⁵⁰ Ibid., p. 221.

¹⁵¹ Ibid., p. 215.

¹⁵² *TLS*, 30 November 1967, p. 1155.

¹⁵³ The original trilogy was televised in a 13-part series by Yorkshire Television. Peyton liked the actors, who used to come to stay (and ride) with her, and they wanted to continue the story, so she wrote *Flambards Divided* for them. (The television sequel didn't come to pass.) K.M. Peyton, 'Preface', *The Team* (Edinburgh, 2008), p. iv. Christine McKenna, who played Christina, only learned to ride to play the part – and having learned side-saddle brought her own saddle with her. Ibid.

manor house, the past, that haunts and compels, despite its appalling masters. An essential part of the seduction of the Flambards books is the pull towards the ruins.¹⁵⁴ The hunting season itself contributes to the pervasive melancholy of the trilogy; the landscape described is predominately that of the hunting season, the dying year with its yellowing grass and shrivelling oak leaves, mud and brimming ditches.

Peyton's affinity for the ruined, the less-than-perfect, is evidenced elsewhere in her work – in, for example, the portrait drawn of twentieth-century renovations to a labourer's cottage in a novel published in 1972. *A Pattern of Roses* is not a hunting novel per se but rather a ghost story with a hunting incident at its heart.¹⁵⁵ Tim Ingram, 17 years old and recovering from glandular fever in his parents' renovated country cottage, is 'haunted' by Tom Inskip, an agricultural labourer who lived in a previous incarnation of the cottage and died suddenly, aged 16, in 1911. In this novel Peyton grafts fiction onto a real-life accident, again embedding the once-invisible rural labourer into the story. On January 2 1909, at Fawsley, Northamptonshire, 10 Pytchley hounds – Picture, Risky, Sybil, Rosemary, Raiment, Diamond, Stately, Gayly, Mermaid and Rivulet – went through the ice in pursuit of their fox and drowned in the lake. A monument with their names engraved was erected in the grounds of Fawsley Manor; that monument reappears, verbatim but for a change in date, in Peyton's novel. In her version, Tom dies with the hounds.

Like Dick in the Flambards series, Tom Inskip has fallen in love with a young girl well above his station. Netty Bellinger proves to be Tom's downfall, just as Christina ruins Dick's life: he is sacked from his job after she lures him away from the fields to walk in the woods with her, and she is eventually responsible for his death. Netty had walked Mermaid as a puppy and seeing her hound drowning begs him to attempt a rescue. He fails, has to be rescued himself, and the submersion of his malnourished, overworked body in the icy water kills him.¹⁵⁶

¹⁵⁴ 'Ruins', wrote Roger Deakin in *Wildwood: A Journey Through Trees* (London, 2007), 'are always doing what everything really wants to do all the time: returning themselves to the earth, melting back into the landscape' (p. 5). This is precisely what Christina sees Flambards as doing, although at times she is appalled by the decay. In 'The House', first broadcast by BBC Radio 4 on 5 December 2005, Deakin also argued that ruins erode the boundaries between nature and culture, the natural and the human world. Ruins permit democratic entry as well. In *The Enigma of Arrival* (London, 1987) V.S. Naipaul writes of the seductive power of 'a beauty that hadn't been planned for'. The builder of the Wiltshire house in which he lived in 1970, he mused, would never have imagined someone such as him wandering through its grounds (pp. 54–5).

¹⁵⁵ This too was filmed for television, in 1983, with Helena Bonham Carter playing Netty.

¹⁵⁶ Peyton contrasts throughout the story the warmth and comfort of the rector's house in which Netty lives with the Tom's own living conditions: on one occasion Tom arrives as the dining table is being cleared and has to retreat because he can't bear to look; the scarcely touched pheasant and treacle sponge 'made tears come into his eyes, and he

Conclusion: Gone Away

Fox hunting, lauded as England's national sport, became a staple in adult fiction and poetry from the mid-1840s, spawning a literature of its own and incorporated in other work as a feature of contemporary life. From Surtees through Sassoon its invocation was routinely celebratory. Such reference would gradually disappear in the early twentieth century: hunting was a decidedly anti-modern activity and even those who continued to cherish the sport increasingly acknowledged it as something of an anachronism, an inexplicable survival from the post-War world. While the democratisation of the hunting field inherent in Surtees and celebrated by Trollope continued, and its social composition expanded, the aristocratic associations persisted as well. In twentieth-century literature the hunt began to be invoked not as a commonplace instance of healthy and exciting recreation engaged in by and drawing together a cross-section of English society, but primarily as a symbol of the decaying – and barbarous – landed classes. From the late 1920s new portrayals of fox hunting as an element of contemporary rural life were largely confined to children's fiction. By the 1970s references to the sport were disappearing in that genre as well, although both the adult and children's hunting literature survive in reprints and are still read. 'N's accusations of 'tyranny and barbarity' were beginning to resonate as they had not done in his own time. In the twentieth century class and cruelty concerns increasingly influenced both the way in which fox hunting was depicted in literature and public reception of that literature. These twin concerns would also pose a genuine threat to the survival of the sport, leading from 1997 to a sustained political attack which would result in the legal ban of 'traditional' forms of fox hunting.

had had to go out and wait till the cook was finished and the velour cloth was back on the bare table'. K.M. Peyton, *A Pattern of Roses* (Oxford, 1972), p. 87.

This page has been left blank intentionally

Chapter 5

Labour and the Fox

I think the majority of people in my constituency, quite frankly, just see it as one of those kind of tally-ho, tally-ho [issues that have] nothing to do with modern Britain.

Deputy Prime Minister John Prescott, *Today* programme, BBC Radio 4

Introduction

In the twentieth century the attack on blood sports in general and fox hunting in particular, rather than remaining the preserve of an intellectual left or being confined to debate in various media, would become a party-political issue: abolition, that is, was gradually taken up as a political cause. As a political issue hunting has occasioned a neat and highly consistent political divide, although there have been colourful anomalies. The Tories produced Ann Widdecombe, MP for Maidstone and the Weald, novelist and, briefly, agony aunt in the *Guardian* and on BBC television. The outspoken Widdecombe, who converted to Catholicism when the Anglican Church allowed women priests, supports traditional ‘family values’ and opposes abortion and gay rights, was among the three of 198 Conservative MPs to vote in favour of the ban. On 22 March 2007 she told Parliament that she wanted every hunt in the country followed by a helicopter with monitoring equipment: fox hunters would become bored and the hunts would go broke. Such fanaticism couldn’t be reasoned with, *The Field* noted with disgust, it could only be voted out of office.¹ The Labour Party too has thrown up the occasional odd duck. The most prominent pro-hunting Labour member of the Commons was Reginald Thomas Guy Des Voeux Paget (1908–1990), a descendant of five generations of Tory MPs. Paget’s 29 years as MP for Northampton (1945–74) overlapped with his stint as MFH of the Pytchley (1968–1971). His country home was in Market Harborough, in the heart of hunting territory; in London he was said to have led ‘a faintly eighteenth-century bachelor life’.² John Ryman, Labour member for Blyth Valley, 1974–87, was equally colourful and considerably more disreputable: this fox-hunting socialist, married five times, was convicted in 1992 of obtaining cheques by deception and theft and jailed for two and a half years. The *Guardian* commented with some relief that neither man could be described as a typical Labour MP.³ Also atypical are two female Labour politicians who, at the time of writing, hold high office in the pro-hunting Countryside Alliance:

¹ ‘Breaking Covert: Tories and Hunting’, *The Field* (July 2007): p. 19.

² *ODNB*.

³ ‘Commentary: The wild mammals of the Commons who face extinction’, *The Guardian*, 13 February 1995.

Kate Hoey, MP for Vauxhall from 1989, a former minister for sport in Tony Blair's government, became chair in 2005; life peer Baroness Ann Mallalieu has served as president since 1998.⁴ But these high-profile exceptions only serve to prove the rule; generally speaking, Tories defended the sport and Labour attacked it.⁵ However, while the Labour Party might from its inception have been viewed as a natural ally of the abolitionists, a number of factors contributed to a marked disinclination to adopt a ban on hunting as party policy.

The Early Days: Keir Hardie

Although formal commitment to a ban was a long time coming, a division in views along party lines has an extensive history. Television cook, robust denigrator of vegetarians and supporter of hunting and the countryside Clarissa Dickson Wright links hostility to blood sports directly to the birth of Labour politics: 'Keir Hardy's two major tenets were banning fox hunting and abolishing the House of Lords'.⁶ This statement is pure hyperbole and wildly inaccurate, from the spelling of Hardie's name to the misrepresentation of his political priorities. James Keir Hardie (1856–1915), founder of the Labour Party, is more famous for his inflammatory attacks on the Royal family than for his criticism of the House of Lords, and while he was no fan of blood sports his principal political aims centred on improving the lives of the working class rather than attacking the pastimes of their social 'superiors'.

If it is misleading to describe the banning of fox hunting as one of Hardie's primary goals, it nonetheless remains true that Hardie personally felt a deep sympathy towards animals. He 'identified' with them, wrote Caroline Benn (1926–2000). 'They were his cronies'. He loved his own dogs and stopped to talk to horses in the street.⁷ Like Henry Salt and others involved in the Humanitarian

⁴ See <http://www.countryside-alliance.org.uk/the-alliance/about-us/our-board> and 'Animal instincts', *The Guardian*, 1 March 2006.

⁵ Some Conservatives were indifferent: Prime Minister Arthur Balfour commented mildly, 'I do not see why I should break my neck because a dog chooses to run after a nasty smell'. Quoted in Raymond Carr, *English Fox Hunting: A History* (London, 1976), p. 250. A few felt more strongly: in 1982 *The Times* reported that a pressure group had been formed to lobby inside the Conservative Party against hunting. 'Anti-hunting drive by Conservatives', *The Times*, 2 August. Post-ban, there is some indication that the political divide may be blurring slightly. See 'Foxhunting ban likely to remain thanks to new generation of Tory MPs', *The Guardian*, 28 October 2010 and <http://www.conservativesagainstoffoxhunting.com>.

⁶ Clarissa Dickson Wright, *Spilling the Beans* (London, 2007), p. 274. This claim was repeated, with even greater misrepresentation of Hardie's name – 'Kier Hardy' – in *Rifling Through My Drawers* (London, 2009), pp. 107–8.

⁷ Caroline Benn, *Keir Hardie* (London, 1992), pp. 296–7.

League, Hardie's personal tendencies and preferences lay outside the social norms of his own class and time: he was teetotal, vegetarian, pacifist, slightly mystic. As Kenneth Morgan notes, 'even in the working class world' he was 'an outsider', bohemian, romantic and eccentric.⁸

In Hardie's own time the championing of animal rights would have appeared as but one facet in his eccentricity. Today, however, it is not merely critics who link his interest in animal welfare to his socialist politics.⁹ In her 1992 biography of Hardie, Benn – a member of the Labour Party and wife of Labour politician Tony Benn – touched on a number of 'concerns which seemed idiosyncratic during Hardie's lifetime': the environment, animal rights, 'peace and non-violent war resistance'.¹⁰ His interest in animal welfare is raised almost immediately, in Benn's recounting of Hardie's experience in the mines as a 12-year-old child:

His lonely life was mitigated by an important friendship that every person close to him in life came to know about, with Donald, a shaggy highlander. Hardie first saw the pony when he was refusing to budge and other pit boys had put straw under him and were setting it alight. He rushed up 'and kicked away the straw and ... stroked him ... and from that moment he could do with Donald as he would ...'

This friendship tapped a passion for animals that intensified throughout life. When Hardie read Burns's 'On Seeing a Wounded Hare Limp By', it not only persuaded him not to sanction hunting for sport, but his reaction confirmed his determination to treat animals like sentient beings: 'I have never thrown a stone at bird or beast since'.¹¹

As a politician Hardie is on record for opposing stag hunting and a bill that would have allowed stray dogs to be destroyed.¹² In 1895 he acted as chair of the Humanitarian League's conference. His life work, however, would not be the improvement of the working conditions of pit ponies or the abolition of blood sports. As Benn comments, while socialists may have been 'the first modern ecologists', in Hardie's day, as in Humanity Dick Martin's, animal rights tended to be laughed at 'by those being treated little better than animals themselves'.¹³ That she picked up on animal welfare references owes entirely to the fact that by

⁸ Kenneth O. Morgan, *Keir Hardie: Radical and Socialist* (London, 1975), p. 55. For Hardie as outsider, see also p. 289.

⁹ Hardie's animal welfare interests were largely ignored before the end of the twentieth century. His earliest biographer, William Stewart, whose *J. Keir Hardie* was published in 1921, makes no reference to his subject's compassion for animals, nor does it feature in Morgan's biography, or in his entry for Hardie in the *ODNB*.

¹⁰ Benn, *Keir Hardie*, p. x.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 9.

¹² *Ibid.*, pp. 171, 297.

¹³ *Ibid.*, p. 432. On Hardie and 'ecology' see p. 138.

the final decade of the twentieth century they had become political issues in their own right. When the Labour Party first came into being, human welfare – safe working conditions, better wages and shorter working hours, land law reform, full extension of the franchise – took precedence. Henry Salt, whose humanitarian interests spanned human and animal welfare alike, had hoped the two causes would be jointly pursued by Labour and that a range of animal welfare issues would ‘grow proportionately’ with the rise of the party. Those hopes were dashed. In his time the Labour Party, fearing to ‘seem sentimental and impractical’, expressed little interest or enthusiasm for such reforms. Hardie – and Ramsay Macdonald – remained friends of Salt, but animal welfare, like Hardie’s pacifism, was a matter of personal belief rather than a mainstay of Labour party politics in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.¹⁴ The disappointed champion of humanitarianism wrote,

I have often thought that Walter Crane’s cartoon, ‘The Triumph of Labour’, has a deep esoteric meaning, though perhaps not intended by its author. Every socialist knows the picture – a May-day procession, in which a number of working-folk are riding to the festival in a large wain, with a brave flutter of flags and banners, and supporting above them, with upturned palms, a ponderous-looking globe on which is inscribed ‘The Solidarity of Labour’ – the whole party being drawn by two sturdy Oxen, the true heroes of the scene, who must be wishing the solidarity of labour were a little less solid, for it would appear that those heedless merry-makers ought to be prosecuted for overloading their faithful friends. The Triumph of Labour seems a fit title for the scene, but in a sense which democrats would do well to lay to heart. Do not horses and other ‘beasts of burden’ deserve their share of citizenship?¹⁵

When the Labour Party first considered the possibility of making a ban on hunting official policy the impetus came from the grassroots, originating with the party membership rather than its leadership. The subject began to be debated at the Party’s conferences, and in 1928 Tom Williams,¹⁶ like Hardie a miner drawn into working-class politics, made a motion against blood sports. The general election programme for that year contained a statement ‘to the effect that Labour in their concern for the needs of workers and for the country generally is also alive to the need for further protective legislation for animals to prevent them from suffering needless pain’.¹⁷ But Williams’s motion was not debated and an

¹⁴ Stephen Winsten, *Salt and his Circle* (London, 1951), p. 151.

¹⁵ Henry Salt, *Seventy Years Among Savages* (London, 1921), p. 216.

¹⁶ On Williams see his autobiography, *Digging for Britain* (London, 1965), and his entry in the *ODNB* (which makes no mention of his hunting opinions).

¹⁷ Report of the Labour Party Annual Conference, 1928, p. 258, quoted in Michael Tichelar, “‘Putting Animals into Politics’: The Labour Party and Hunting in the First Half of the Twentieth Century”, *Rural History*, 17 (2006): p. 213.

animal welfare resolution moved at the 1934 conference likewise received no discussion. The party's election manifesto of 1929 did declare that the Labour Party 'regards the infliction of cruelty upon animals, whether under the name of sport or for the purposes of profit, as barbarous and repulsive, and it will welcome the extension of protective legislation designed to prevent it',¹⁸ but the statement stopped well short of a commitment to implement a ban. And although in 1930 and 1931 bills were introduced to ban the hunting of deer as well as coursing and carted stag hunting, in the Labour government of 1929–31 no attempts were made to abolish fox hunting.¹⁹ The mere introduction of legislation targeting blood sports was sufficient to prompt the hunting community to form the British Field Sports Society (BFSS) to lobby on behalf of its interests, but none of these bills proceeded further than introduction or first reading under the 10-minute rule. In the thirties the abolitionists succeeded in winning a degree of backbench support within the Labour Party, but there were other, more pressing issues to be dealt with in that decade and when the party was returned to power after the war its leadership, rather than making it party policy, instead reneged on non-official support for a ban. Backbenchers such as Anthony Greenwood,²⁰ Seymour Cocks,²¹ Joseph Sparks²² and Frank Fairhurst²³ may have felt passionately about the need to end blood sports, but 'the pressure of political realities'²⁴ in the post-war period meant that the government could not afford to lose the support of the rural community.

¹⁸ *Labour and the Nation* (London, 1929), p. 32.

¹⁹ See Richard H. Thomas, *The Politics of Hunting* (Aldershot, 1983), p. 216, and Table 11.1, 'Anti-hunting legislation', which covers the period 1893–1972.

²⁰ Anthony Greenwood (1911–1982) was the son of the Labour cabinet minister and deputy leader of the Labour Party Arthur Greenwood (1880–1954). In 1948 he served, together with J.B. Priestly, Aldous Huxley and Harold Laski, as vice-president of the National Society for the Abolition of Cruel Sports. Greenwood became a major political figure after 1951, serving on the National Executive Committee of the Labour Party from 1954 to 1970, appointed colonial secretary in 1964 and in 1966 Minister of Housing and Local Government. *ODNB*.

²¹ (1882–1953); see *The Times*, 30 May 1953. In more than 20 years at Westminster Cocks never held office, yet his affectionate obituary was given the title 'Respected and Popular MP'. In his youth friends referred to him as 'the sea-green incorruptible'.

²² (1902–1981), Labour MP for Acton 1945–59. See *The Times*, 16 January 1981.

²³ Frank Fairhurst (1892–1953) left school at 15 to work in a cotton mill. He served on the Wigan town council for 17 years and was actively involved in trade union politics, elected president of the National Association of Power Loom Overlookers and of the Wigan Textile Trades Federation. He withdrew from national politics due to ill health in 1952. *The Times*, 1 September 1953.

²⁴ Thomas, p. 201. See also Tichelar.

The Post-War Labour Government

In the post-war Labour government anti-hunting legislation, including a bill specifically banning fox hunting, was introduced in the form of private member's bills. The first was a Bill to Protect British Wild Animals from Cruelty, circulated in 1947. Drafted by the National Society for the Abolition of Cruel Sports, the bill excluded fox hunting but would have imposed a ban on all other forms of hunting, as well as the coursing of rabbits and hares. It had the support of Greenwood and a modified version was introduced in the House in February the following year by Cocks, Labour MP for the Broxtowe Division of Nottinghamshire, and debated in 1948–49 – the fullest debate yet accorded to any proposed anti-hunting legislation. A second bill abolishing fox hunting was scheduled to be introduced in March. This split was deliberate and tactical. While both bills would attract significant support within the Labour Party, the first would also draw in some of the Opposition. Abolishing fox hunting was much more controversial, and if included in a general prohibition could prevent the legislation from being passed. But the splitting of the issue also proved controversial. Members who might have voted for the first bill and against the second hesitated, fearing that if the second bill were withdrawn an amendment might be made to the first to include fox hunting.²⁵ The Duke of Beaufort, MFH and president of the BFSS, raised similar concerns. Cocks protested that the decision to exclude fox hunting from his Protection of Animals Bill was a personal one, that he had never intended to include that sport in his proposed legislation and that although he was 'not personally in favour' of fox hunting he would resist any such legislative manoeuvring.²⁶ Greenwood wrote in staunch support of Cocks, and of the House of Commons being given separate opportunity to express opinion on what many believed to be two separate issues. There was no question, he insisted, of a radical amendment of the first bill to include fox hunting.²⁷

Protest of both measures mounted and on 17 February *The Times* reported that large numbers of farmers and miners were lobbying MPs against the bills. They had been met by Tom Williams, now minister of agriculture, and the matter had been raised at a meeting of the Parliamentary Labour Party.²⁸ A day later the paper's parliamentary correspondent told its readers that the government was seeking to dissuade Labour MPs who supported the two private members' Bills. Since Labour Party support was weak and the Opposition strong in rural areas, the timing of the proposed legislations was 'inopportune'.²⁹

²⁵ 'Abolishing Hunting and Coursing: Opposition to Bills', *The Times*, 4 February 1949.

²⁶ 'Blood Sports: To the Editor of The Times', *The Times*, 7 February 1949.

²⁷ 'Fox-hunting', *The Times*, 18 February 1949 (letter dated 15 February).

²⁸ 'Blood Sports Lobbying', *The Times*, 17 February 1949.

²⁹ 'Labour Views on Blood Sports: Government Seek to Restrain M.P.s', *The Times*, 18 February 1949.

On 25 February Cocks's Bill was defeated on second reading 214–101, with Williams leading the front-bench opposition to it. The Home Secretary, James Chuter Ede, who like Williams had once sponsored anti-hunting legislation, changed sides and voted against it.³⁰ While the bill was left to a free vote there was clear evidence of government preparation for that vote: when the division was called on a Friday afternoon the prime minister and the foreign secretary were both present and the Treasury well represented.³¹

Why did Williams change his mind? 'Killing any animal', he wrote in his autobiography, 'was and still is against all my instincts'. As a young man he had reacted with horror to his parents' suggestion that he become apprentice to a local pork butcher rather than follow his brothers down the mine: 'memories of the agonised screams of pigs bleeding to death from slit throats, which was still the customary fashion of killing them in those days, were too fresh in my mind'.³² Instead, he signed on at Thrybergh Hall Colliery and became a pony driver. In 1965 he still remembered the hardship endured by beast as well as man and boy underground, his pony and others collapsing from exhaustion: 'I try to forget these cruelties and think of the more humane treatment used today'.³³

In speaking against the Bill Williams opened with the issue of cruelty; with no effective alternative proposed the abolition of hunting would lead to greater cruelty rather than less. But he quickly turned to other concerns. The adverse publicity accorded the Bill 'had had widespread repercussions and the controversy endangered the food production drive'. If 'the limited opportunities of country people for recreation were struck at, they would regard it as a low return for their efforts'. The measure, if passed, 'would alienate the support of the rural population for the food production programme'.³⁴

Tom Williams's change of heart may not have been due entirely to electoral practicalities. Like Hardie, Williams was committed to improving the lives of working-class people and his political engagement began with work for the mining unions, in his case the Yorkshire Mining Association. But during the Labour Party's years in opposition he became its expert on agriculture and increasingly sympathetic to the plight of farmers: the agricultural depression of the interwar period meant that social and economic conditions in rural communities

³⁰ Chuter Ede (1882–1965) was born into a Unitarian family of lower-middle-class shopkeepers; his primary passion was originally for education and he was instrumental in the passage of the 1944 Education Act which introduced compulsory secondary education in the state sector for children over the age of 11. In later life he became increasingly preoccupied with the abolition of the death penalty. *ODNB*.

³¹ 'Intervention by Government: Ministers in the Lobby', *The Times*, 26 February 1949.

³² Williams, p. 12.

³³ *Ibid.*, p. 14.

³⁴ See *Hansard*, 5th ser., vol. 461 (1949), cols 2227–34.

were as dire as those in pit villages.³⁵ In Don Valley he helped to form the first branch of the National Union of Agricultural Workers.³⁶ In abandoning his pre-war support of the abolition of hunting Williams may simply have chosen to put people before animals and acted in part from a genuine desire not to eliminate the primary recreation of rural people. Nor did he want the Labour Party 'to go down in history as a party anxious to abolish the pleasures of others'. On a practical level, however, his anxiety is understandable. From his time as R.S. Hudson's deputy at the Ministry of Agriculture during the war Williams had sought to revive the agricultural industry. As minister of agriculture in the post-war government that task became even more imperative: rationing would continue until 1954. 'The responsibilities we faced at the Ministry of Agriculture were frightening', he remembered. 'For many years we had depended on imported food for two out of every three meals. At home our agriculture had been just ticking over, and equipment was still short'.³⁷ Agriculture was essential to post-war reconstruction and the farming community needed to be kept onside.

Agricultural policy features prominently in Williams's autobiography; the anti-hunting bills are accorded no mention whatsoever. But the farming community Williams had worked so hard to support hated the bills and made their hatred known. On 21 February 1949 *The Times's* agricultural correspondent had argued against alienating the rural community. Even those farmers who did not hunt themselves accepted fox hunting as a sport which enriched country life. Williams also pointed out that regardless of the pros and cons of hunting, this was decidedly not the time to attack the countryman's views on it. The cooperation of farmers was essential to rebuilding the nation.³⁸

The National Farmers' Union (NFU) supported the British Field Sports Society and declared their intention to fight anti-hunting measures at both the local and national level.³⁹ According to *The Times* some 40 out of a total of 59 branches of the NFU had expressed strong disapproval of any attempt to curtail field sports and had joined the BFSS campaign, launched in October 1948, to defend long-established country pursuits.⁴⁰ The NFU was thus in the fortunate position of being wooed by two communities. The Labour government was anxious to protect a close working relationship with the union established via the 1947 Agricultural Act, which had continued the wartime system of annual price reviews. The BFSS, for its part, was keen to cultivate the union's support to defeat the bill: the Duke of Beaufort claimed that 'almost everyone who hunted' was connected with farming

³⁵ See Williams, Chapter 6.

³⁶ See *ibid.*, pp. 41, 62.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 124.

³⁸ 'Fox Hunting: Farmers' Opinions – Ill-Chosen Moment', *The Times*, 21 February 1949.

³⁹ On the relationship between the BFSS and the NFU see Thomas, p. 150.

⁴⁰ 'Field Sports Campaign – Organized Defence', *The Times*, 29 September 1948.

and that many packs were run 'entirely' by farmers.⁴¹ Tolerated and condescended to in the nineteenth century, farmers had become essential to the survival of fox hunting. The society's Countryman's and Sportsmen's Pledge, signed by 1.2 million people, emphasised inclusiveness, stating that field sports 'provided health-giving recreation for all who live on and make their livelihood from the land', as well as for 'a great and increasing number of townspeople'.⁴²

While the BFSS may have cultivated farmers' support for political purposes it was not alone in emphasising the significance of farmers in the post-war field. Joseph Sparks had described followers of the hunt as 'spivs and drones' during debate, prompting one G.A. Martelli to protest in a letter to *The Times* that fox-hunting was not the sport merely of wealthy, leisured people.⁴³ Martelli described the composition of his own, small (unnamed) local hunt in Buckinghamshire as being dominated by farmers and argued that fox hunting was kept going by the support received from a variety of hard-working people. His census of the field, apart from farmers, included a farm employee, a market gardener, an innkeeper, a couple of professional men, five children under the age of 14 and two young girls, a couple of married women and a horse dealer.⁴⁴ Michael F. Berry likewise insisted that most fox hunters were farmers rather than wastrels.⁴⁵

Given the socio-economic background of some of the backbench voices it seems likely that class as well as cruelty factored into their attack on hunting. Sparks was a trade unionist who had previously been employed as a clerk with the Great Western Railway; while in Parliament he spent much of his time promoting the welfare of railway workers and he held the non-working population in contempt. His response to the complaints in *The Times* was unrepentant: 'Mr. Martelli ... is in error if he thinks those epithets ["spivs and drones"] apply only to rich followers of the hunt. The words have general application to all persons who may be said not to be usefully employed or who waste their time upon frivolous pursuits'. He also argued that hunting was unnecessarily cruel, and 'unnecessary cruelty, whether to man or beast, is a relic of jungle days, and something a little better is expected of us in this civilized age'. If hunting was such a pleasure, he continued, why not hunt a Master or one of his followers with a 'few hungry wolves'?⁴⁶

The correspondence in *The Times* indicates that while class was one of the dividing lines between those for and against hunting, it was not the only one. The urban/rural divide was also important: farmers too were workers, workers who had only recently, and perhaps grudgingly, won a new respect from the more traditional aristocratic leadership within the hunting community. In the post-war period their support would remain crucial as fox hunting came under attack. The

⁴¹ Ibid.

⁴² Quoted in Tichelar, p. 224.

⁴³ 'A Fox-hunting Census', *The Times*, 22 March 1948.

⁴⁴ Ibid.

⁴⁵ 'A Fox-hunting Census', *The Times*, 1 April 1948.

⁴⁶ 'A Fox-hunting Census', 27 March 1948.

sport was thus promoted as a country recreation rather than an aristocratic one, as Tom Williams described it in arguing against Cocks's bill, 'a traditional feature of country life patronised by very large masses of the rural population'.⁴⁷

The Scott Henderson Report, 1951

While the anti-hunting legislation of 1948/9 failed, the government did agree to a parliamentary investigation, under the chairmanship of J. Scott Henderson, into the issue, on condition that the second bill specifically targeting fox hunting was withdrawn. Frank Fairhurst, Labour MP for Oldham, had been due to move the second reading of a private member's bill to abolish fox hunting (the text of which had been published on 5 March) on 11 March. Instead, he drew the deputy prime minister's attention to a motion tabled in the House signed by some 230 MPs calling for an enquiry into the law relating to cruelty to animals. The government, reported *The Times*, appeared to have restored harmony within its party by agreeing to an official investigation of the issue.⁴⁸

The reputed harmony soon turned to discontent when the committee membership was made public. The committee was clearly stacked in favour of the hunting community: Francis Pitt was Master of a Shropshire hunt and vice-president of the BFSS; Major L.P. Pugh was veterinary surgeon to the West Kent foxhounds; Mr W.J. Brown was a regular contributor to *The Field*; John Cripps edited *The Countryman*; Dr Burn-Murdoch was a fisherman. The sympathies of Charles Brandon, of the Transport and General Workers Union, and zoologist P.B. Medawar were less obvious: Professor Medawar belonged to the Universities Federation for Animal Welfare, which campaigned for better treatment for animals in zoos and on farms as well as in laboratories, but the federation had no public stance on hunting. The committee contained no representatives from any of the anti-hunting societies.

Unsurprisingly, the report published in 1951 was a decided victory for the sporting community.⁴⁹ The committee saw its mandate as assessing the relative cruelty of a variety of means of controlling the populations of wild animals and concluded that hunting was less cruel than trapping, snaring, shooting or gassing animals. It did condemn otter hunting as cruel and called for further inquiry into whether control of the otter population was required to protect fish supplies. The committee failed, however, to recommend prohibition of the hunting of catted deer, which by no stretch of the imagination could be conceived of as a form of pest control, and did not, as its members admitted, 'fulfil any useful function'. But

⁴⁷ *Hansard* (Commons), 1949, vol. 461, col. 2228.

⁴⁸ See 'Cruelty to Animals: An All-Party Motion' and 'Cruelty to Animals: Government Order Investigation', *The Times*, 5 and 11 March 1949.

⁴⁹ *Report of the Committee on Cruelty to Wild Animals*, Cmd. 8266, June 1951, commonly referred to as the Scott Henderson Report.

nor, in their minds, did this particular form of sport involve a 'sufficient degree of cruelty to justify legislation to prohibit it'.⁵⁰ And, echoing the argument made by Anthony Trollope in the nineteenth century, they indicated that field sports which made no useful contribution to pest control might still 'be considered useful in that they provide healthy recreation for a number of people'.⁵¹ The report categorically denied that it was 'ethically wrong to pursue or kill an animal for sport if the infliction of any degree of suffering was involved'.⁵² Blood sports could not be condemned on moral grounds and where the fox was concerned, hunting caused less suffering than other methods of control.

Labour in Opposition and Minority Governments

Soon after the Scott Henderson report was published the Labour Party went into a long period of opposition, not returning to government until 1964. Backbench support for anti-hunting legislation persisted; in 1965 a bill was introduced to ban deer hunting and between 1966 and 1975 anti-coursing bills appeared on an annual basis. Another attempt to abolish stag hunting was made in 1967–68; the following year saw a Protection of Otters Bill, with a further attempt made in 1972. The prime minister, Harold Wilson, was a firm opponent of coursing, which he described as a 'barbarous anachronism', and in 1970 he managed to persuade his cabinet – against the advice of the Home Office – to adopt a combined deer hunting and hare coursing bill as a government bill.⁵³ The government's hare-coursing abolition proposal received a second reading in May of that year but Parliament was dissolved before it could be passed. No attempts were made to abolish fox hunting. As Richard Thomas notes, it had become abundantly clear that even a 'simple anti-coursing bill' was not only a time-consuming proposition but one which would require invoking the Parliament Acts of 1911 and 1949 to overcome opposition in the House of Lords.⁵⁴ That procedure became unfeasible: between 1974 and 1979 the Labour Party ruled only as a minority government.

⁵⁰ Ibid., p. 110.

⁵¹ Ibid., p. 41.

⁵² Ibid., p. 107.

⁵³ Wilson was also a determined opponent of the death penalty and parallels in the arguments advanced for its abolition and the abolition of blood sports can be found from the nineteenth century, both practices rejected as cruel and anachronistic. See Douglas Hay, 'Hanging and the English Judges: The Judicial Politics of Retention and Abolition', in David Garland, Randall McGowen and Michael Meranze (eds), *America's Death Penalty: Between Past and Present* (New York: New York University Press, 2011).

⁵⁴ See Thomas, p. 202, and as cited therein, *Hansard* (Commons), 1969, vol. 792, col. 1291 and *The Crossman Diaries*, vol. 3, 5 February and 12 March 1970 (London, 1977).

Since abolishing the coursing of hares, let alone fox hunting, appeared politically impossible the abolitionists switched tactics, choosing to refer the issue once more to the party's conferences in an attempt to secure a commitment to a ban in an election manifesto. The party's National Executive Committee (NEC) contained sufficient sympathetic members to allow anti-hunting and animal welfare resolutions made at the 1977 conference by J. Holbrook and Norman Atkinson to be forwarded to the Agricultural Sub-Committee of the NEC's Home Policy Committee. Eric Heffer, son of a Hertford cobbler who throughout his career as an MP consistently backed left-wing causes (he was affiliated with the Communist Party between 1941 and 1946) was a member of that committee;⁵⁵ its chair, Tony Benn, was a Labour politician in the tradition of Hardie and Williams: radical, teetotal and an animal lover.⁵⁶ Ensuing discussion papers advocated a variety of measures designed to improve animal welfare, ranging from controls relating to factory farming and the transportation of live animals through those targeting animal experiments and the welfare of animals kept in zoos and as domestic pets. A total ban on all forms of coursing and hunting was also recommended.

While the Home Policy Committee accepted the various recommendations in June 1978, political expediency was once again a consideration. Public opinion polls taken from 1958 indicated that the majority of the population would welcome the prohibition of stag hunting and those conducted in the 1970s clearly favoured abolition of the coursing of live hares.⁵⁷ Deer hunting, *The Times* admitted in 1969, was no longer socially acceptable.⁵⁸ But fox hunting remained a more divisive issue. *The Times* conceded that 'logically' it was difficult to defend the sport and anticipated that one day the case for banning it might become 'irresistible'. But that day had not yet arrived.⁵⁹

Tony Benn's laconic diary entry for 6 March 1978 reads, 'At the Home Policy Committee, which wasn't terribly exciting, we agreed in principle that the Party should commit itself to opposing blood sports; we will also look at factory farming, the protection of the environment, vivisection and cruelty to animals'. On 28 June he noted an argument over the issue: Heffer, vice-chair of the LACS, 'spoke passionately against bloodsports' but Fred Mulley was 'cautious' and 'Shirley Williams wanted a compromise to give the Government more time'. Benn himself had indicated that the party 'couldn't run away from the issue', and that he was 'personally very much against bloodsports'. It was simply a question of how to go about achieving a ban. 'It had to go to Conference, and the Government should provide time for legislation, but it should be legislation against cruelty. I said I never understood why bloodsports weren't taken through the courts on grounds

⁵⁵ For Heffer see *ODNB* and his autobiography, *Never a Yes Man* (London, 1992).

⁵⁶ The sub-committee was chaired by Joan Maynard.

⁵⁷ See Thomas, pp. 190–99, for a discussion of opinion polls held between 1958 and 1981.

⁵⁸ 'Outdated: Objectionable', *The Times*, 5 November 1969.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*

of cruelty'.⁶⁰ However, while the subcommittee might succeed in persuading the NEC to adopt its recommendation, it was unlikely to be included in the party's manifesto. Marcus Kimball, Conservative MP for Gainsborough and chairman of the BFSS, identified the Home Policy Committee's recommendation as marking the point at which blood sports became a party political issue.⁶¹ But Conservative leaders in 1978 were confident that in an election battle Labour might lose as many votes as it gained if it committed to a ban, and Labour was only too aware of this fact.⁶² On 14 June *The Times* published an editorial ominously titled 'Life, Liberty and the Pursuit of Foxes'; the paper described the proposal as 'odious' and argued (presciently) that a ban on blood sports would be seen as an attack on the countryside and widely disobeyed, thereby undermining the law. Under the circumstances it is hardly surprising that *Living without Cruelty: Labour's Charter for Animal Protection*, a policy background paper published in July 1978, while recommending that fox hunting, as well as hare coursing, beagling and stag and deer hunting, be banned, stopped short of any promise to include such a ban in the party's legislative programme.⁶³

The NEC met on 16 July 1978 and voted nineteen to one in favour of making anti-blood sports policy part of the manifesto, but Norman Atkinson indicated that while stag hunting and the coursing of hares would be banned, fox hunting would 'probably be left to a "free vote" in the House of Commons'.⁶⁴ And indeed the Labour Party's manifesto for 1979 promised only to ban hare coursing and the hunting of stag and deer. Angling and shooting were not to be affected; fox hunting was not referred to at all. The NEC, reported John Groser in *The Times*, had asked for reconsideration of the issue. The concern was once again the potential damage such a pledge might do to the Labour vote in an election, particularly in the countryside. The prime minister, James Callaghan, feared that Labour might lose in rural and mining areas if the party committed to a fox-hunting ban. Labour should instead focus on less contentious issues, such as hare coursing and stag hunting. Ronald Hayward, general secretary of the Labour Party, subsequently confirmed the prime minister's priorities.⁶⁵ The move to delete the proposed ban from the NEC's *The Care and Protection of Animals* ironically originated with one of the most staunch opponents of blood sports, Eric Heffer.⁶⁶ He put the party first.

⁶⁰ Tony Benn, *Conflicts of Interest: Diaries 1977–1980* (London, 1990), pp. 288, 317.

⁶¹ 'Blood sport groups unite against ban', *The Times*, 14 June 1978.

⁶² 'Labour manifesto may seek blood sports ban', *The Times*, 8 March 1978; 'Ban on blood sports put forward as Labour aim', *The Times*, 13 June 1978.

⁶³ See Tichelar, pp. 229–30 and 'Labour to reconsider ban on blood sports', *The Times*, 29 June 1978; 'No place for blood sports in Labour's manifesto', *The Times*, 27 July 1978.

⁶⁴ *Howl* 11 (Autumn 1978): 1, quoted in Thomas, p. 205.

⁶⁵ 'Labour to reconsider ban on blood sports'. See also the editorial in the *Guardian* on the same date.

⁶⁶ 'No place for blood sports in Labour's manifesto', *The Times*, 27 July 1978.

Given the election result of 1979, at a national level Labour policy on fox hunting would prove a moot issue. A battle drawn on party-political lines continued to be fought, however, in local government arenas as Labour-dominated borough and county councils, urged on by the League against Cruel Sports, opted to ban hunting within their specific jurisdictions. More than 25 had voted on hunting by the middle of 1982, and 15 Labour-controlled councils, including the county councils of Mid-Glamorgan, Humberside and Derbyshire, had banned hunting on council-owned land.⁶⁷ As the proportion of land affected was minuscule such victories were largely symbolic. In opposition, however, under the leadership of Michael Foot, the Labour Party would finally commit to abolishing the sport, in March 1983.⁶⁸ Foot, unlike Keir Hardie, was equally committed to abolishing the House of Lords.

The section of the strongly socialist 1983 party manifesto titled ‘Animal protection’ indicated that ‘Hare coursing, fox hunting and all forms of hunting with dogs will be made illegal’, as would the use of snares. Angling and shooting would not be affected. The policy had little effect as Margaret Thatcher was returned in the 1983 general election, but Labour politicians continued to fight the issue at the local level. The ‘Aims and Objectives of the Chesterfield Labour Party’, as articulated in January 1986, included ‘the banning of all blood sports on land owned by the Derbyshire County and Chesterfield Borough Councils, and, wherever possible, to seek to abolish blood sport altogether’.⁶⁹ Labour backbenchers kept the issue alive in Parliament via the by now traditional private member’s bills. In February 1986 Kevin McNamara, Labour MP for Kingston and Hull, introduced an amendment to the 1911 Protection of Animals Act that would have extended legal protection to wild animals; in 1992 he introduced a Wild Mammals (Protection) Bill, the second clause of which banned the use of a dog to kill, injure, pursue or attack a wild animal. Human entertainment, McNamara

⁶⁷ Thomas, pp. 100–2; see also Emma Griffin, *Blood Sport: Hunting in Britain since 1066* (New Haven, 2007), pp. 202–5, and coverage in *The Times*: ‘Council fox hunt ban in South Glamorgan’, *The Times*, 7 May 1982; ‘Humberside likely to ban hunting’, *The Times*, 12 May 1982; ‘Sons of the soil in hunt ban protest’, *The Times*, 13 May 1982. The attempt to secure a similar ban in council-owned farmland in Leicestershire, hunting’s heartland and home to the Quorn, the Pytchley, the Belvoir and the Cottesmore hunts, among others, failed by a narrow margin (46–42). Forty-four of the councillors who voted to reaffirm the rights of the nine hunts which operated in the county were Conservatives. See ‘Hunt followers harry council’, *The Times*, 26 March 1982; ‘Fox hunting debate likely to be fierce’, *The Times*, 31 March 1982; ‘Victory for pro-hunting lobby in close vote’, *The Times*, 1 April 1982. Attempts by the Cambridgeshire and Wiltshire County Councils similarly failed: ‘Council to vote on fox hunting’, *The Times*, 17 May 1982; ‘Hunt ban on 1,150 farms is rejected’, *The Times*, 19 May 1982; ‘News in Brief: Wiltshire votes for hunting’, *The Times*, 26 May 1982.

⁶⁸ ‘Foot pledge takes hunting into party politics’, *The Times*, 28 March 1983.

⁶⁹ Quoted in Tony Benn, *The End of an Era: Diaries 1980–1990* (London, 1992), p. 434.

argued, could not justify hunting.⁷⁰ Neither of his legislative initiatives had any hope of becoming law: the 1986 amendment was introduced under the 10-minute rule, the 1992 bill with a general election looming. But the second of McNamara's attempts occasioned the first sustained debate (five hours) in the House over the issue of hunting since 1949, and his bill was defeated on second reading by only 12 votes (187–175). The debate again occurred on a Friday and as in 1949 the House of Commons was packed.⁷¹ The following year a private member's bill was introduced by Tony Banks, Labour MP for Newham Northwest, which would have abolished fox hunting with hounds. Like McNamara's first measure it was introduced under the 10-minute rule and when Banks finished speaking there was no answer from the Conservatives. In that same year, however, Labour succeeded in banning the sport from council-owned land – nearly 10,000 acres – in Leicestershire, the county council voting 42–33 in favour of Labour group leader Martin Ryan's resolution. Ryan was temperate in his remarks, condemning fox hunting as brutal and indicating that public opinion was on his side.⁷² Banks, by contrast, castigated the hunting community as 'disgusting, barbarous, anachronistic, hypocrites, thugs, motley villains'.⁷³ In December 1993 Banks unveiled an LACS poster which portrayed foxes as beauties and fox hunters as beasts in an attempt to persuade all local authorities to ban hunting on their land.⁷⁴

In 1995 another Wild Mammals (Protection) Bill was put before the House, this time introduced by the Labour MP for Dumbarton, John McFall.⁷⁵ Since McFall had drawn fourteenth place in the draw for private members' bills there was no chance of it succeeding; the bill also suffered drafting problems (its scope was considered too widely cast). But the 1995 bill did, in its entirety, reach a second reading and a ban on blood sports increasingly appeared a genuine possibility, especially with the prospect of a Labour majority at the next election. While Labour had not fully committed itself to a ban and the issue remained a matter of individual conscience, abolition had been overwhelmingly supported at the last party conference.⁷⁶ Animal welfare had entered mainstream political debate, negative press coverage of fox hunting was mounting and that coverage increasingly appeared to take as a given that a ban would be forthcoming.⁷⁷

⁷⁰ 'Entertainment "no basis for killing,"' *The Guardian*, 15 February 1992.

⁷¹ 'Anti-hunting bill defeated by 12 votes', *The Guardian*, 15 February 1992.

⁷² 'Leicestershire bans fox hunting on council's 10,000 acres', *The Guardian*, 30 September 1993.

⁷³ 'The Day in Politics: Thrill of the chase finds Tory MPs gone to ground', *The Guardian*, 28 April 1993.

⁷⁴ 'Fox hunting', *The Guardian*, 28 December 1993.

⁷⁵ See 'Hunting lobby plans late kill in new move to ban blood sports', *The Guardian*, 4 March 1995 and 'MPs vote to ban fox-hunting', *The Independent*, 4 March 1995.

⁷⁶ 'Commentary: The wild mammals of the Commons who face extinction'.

⁷⁷ See, e.g., 'A needless form of sporting cruelty', *The Guardian*, 3 March 1995. Britain, *The Guardian* suggested, had outgrown the sport of fox hunting just as it had

Tony Blair had promised that a Labour government would allow a free vote on hunting with dogs and to introduce legislation if a majority voted for abolition.

New Labour and the Fox

Commenting on the fact that, in a special supplement to mark 10 years of Tony Blair's premiership, the *Observer* singled out the hunting ban as its second defining moment – the first being the Iraq war – Michael Woods argues that the ban was indeed 'one of the truly historic achievements of the New Labour government, criminalising an activity that had been part of rural tradition for several centuries and which was regarded by many as an icon of Englishness, as well as concluding a century-old campaign for its prohibition'.⁷⁸ It was a rare instance of New Labour acting on old Labour principles, and in terms of parliamentary time alone – the 700 hours of debate between 1997 and 2004 – warrants attention. Yet he also notes that the ban 'has about it something of the air of an accidental policy outcome'.⁷⁹ A fox-hunting ban was not originally part of the Labour manifesto when Tony Blair became prime minister in 1997 and it was certainly not part of Blair's own personal agenda: he had voted in favour of McNamara's 1992 bill but is also on record as privately expressing exasperation with the hunting issue. On the evidence of Alastair Campbell he had begun to worry about it within a couple of months of taking office, already predicting disaster.⁸⁰ Between 1997 and 2004 Blair vacillated and repeatedly wished he had not committed himself to some sort of action.⁸¹ This was not his battle, nor was it a cause that interested other senior ministers of the day: Robin Cook, Peter Mandelson, Jack Straw.⁸²

The impetus continued to come from the Labour back benches rather than government itself, but it came quickly. The Labour landslide occurred in May and on 12 June the *Independent* reported that yet another private member's bill was due to be introduced, this time by Michael Foster, the Labour MP for Worcester – prompting an enormous public protest by hunt supporters in Hyde Park.⁸³ The title of Foster's bill, *Wild Mammals (Hunting with Dogs) Bill*, was published on

outgrown bear baiting, slavery and a host of other practices once considered normal.

⁷⁸ Michael Woods, 'Hunting: New Labour success or New Labour failure?', in Michael Woods (ed.), *New Labour's Countryside: Rural Policy in Britain since 1997* (Bristol, 2008), p. 95.

⁷⁹ Ibid.

⁸⁰ Alastair Campbell, *The Alastair Campbell Diaries, Volume Two: Power and the People, 1997–1999* (London, 2011), p. 85.

⁸¹ See *ibid.*, pp. 217, 310, 317, and *Volume Three: Power and Responsibility 1999–2001* (London, 2011), pp. 81, 341, 342, 357, 418, 445, 482, 495, 496.

⁸² Woods, p. 102.

⁸³ 'MP to move foxhunting bill', *The Independent*, 12 June 1997; 'Pink coats, red faces and a little blue language', *The Independent*, 11 July 1997.

16 June and received first reading on the 18th. Its contents were subsequently published on 5 November, and on 28 November 1997, following five hours of debate, the Commons voted 411–151 – a majority of 260 – to ban the sport. Blair himself did not vote; he was visiting British troops in Bosnia. Tony Banks, now sports minister, told the press he believed that the abolitionists would triumph, while the Home Office minister, George Howarth, issued an implicit threat to the House of Lords, warning against any attempt to thwart the expressed will of the Commons: such an attempt would only hasten the end of voting rights for hereditary peers.⁸⁴ The fate of this particular bill was determined by Opposition filibustering in the Commons: it ran out of time during the report stage in March 1998 and Foster withdrew it on 3 July.

Almost a year later, and to general surprise, Blair pledged on BBC's Question Time (8 July 1999), to ban hunting before the next election, a commitment reaffirmed at the September Labour Party conference. Less surprising was a quick retreat: there would be no ban before another parliamentary enquiry into the issue. In December the Committee of Inquiry into Hunting with Dogs in England and Wales was instigated with the mandate of investigating 'the practical aspects of different types of hunting with dogs and its impact on the rural economy, agriculture and pest control, the social and cultural life of the countryside, the management and conservation of wildlife, and animal welfare in particular areas of England and Wales', as well as the consequences in these areas of a ban on hunting, and how a ban might be implemented.⁸⁵ Politically, as Woods notes, the enquiry served 'as a useful delaying tactic'.⁸⁶

Unlike Scott Henderson the Burns committee was not stacked in favour of the hunting community. Chaired by Lord Terry Burns, a former permanent secretary of the Treasury, its other members were academics: Dr Victoria Edwards, Professor Sir John Marsh, Lord Soulsby of Swaffam Prior and Professor Michael Winter. The committee prefaced their findings with the caution that their terms of reference had not required them to determine whether hunting should be banned, or to find a compromise solution. They were simply evidence gatherers, and the evidence they were to gather was of the 'scientific' variety, rather than merely opinion.⁸⁷ That evidence, solicited in two stages, was voluminous and full hearing was given to individuals and organisations on both sides of the debate.⁸⁸

When the Burns committee reported in June 2000 some 175 fox-hunting packs were registered with the Masters of Foxhounds Association in England and Wales.

⁸⁴ 'After 500 years, MPs vote down foxhunting', *The Independent*, 29 November 1997.

⁸⁵ *Report of the Committee of Inquiry into Hunting with Dogs in England and Wales*, 15 June 2002, hereafter *Burns Report*, p. 1.

⁸⁶ Woods, p. 102.

⁸⁷ For Woods, the Burns enquiry is a 'prime example of evidence-based policy making, which has been a key tool of governmentality under New Labour' (p. 103).

⁸⁸ See Woods, p. 104, Table 6.1, for the breakdown in submissions.

These packs averaged 120 subscribers and 200 members of supporters' clubs. The mounted field typically consisted of 30 at a mid-week meet, 50 at a weekend meet.⁸⁹ The committee estimated that between six and eight thousand full-time equivalent jobs depended on hunting, although only 700 resulted from direct employment by hunts.⁹⁰ The economic effects of a ban, the committee concluded, were unlikely to be 'substantial', although 'in the short and medium term, the individual and local effects would be more serious'.⁹¹ Among farmers, however, 'the negative impacts of a ban would be particularly resented'; it would be viewed as 'an avoidable addition to other problems facing the farming community'.⁹² The committee also considered at some length the social and cultural aspects of fox hunting (Chapter 4 of its report). The social and cultural significance of organised hunts, it suggested, might further an understanding of 'why it seems to assume greater significance than an analysis of the sum of its parts may suggest'. Farmers and landowners 'were at the heart' of the hunt, providing the land on which it took place and participating themselves in significant numbers. Farmers also had a broad sense of grievance rooted in the decline of the agricultural sector.⁹³ The threatened future of fox hunting only added 'to the sense that they are an embattled, isolated group, whose interests and way of life' were neither understood nor appreciated by the government or the urban majority.⁹⁴ The general picture that emerged from their investigations was that while 'a significant minority was opposed to hunting',⁹⁵ there were higher levels of support for the activity and opposition to a ban than previous surveys had suggested, and that that support tended to be rooted in a belief in the importance of the hunt to the rural community: nearly two-thirds of the respondents believed that hunting was an important part of the life of the local area although only a quarter thought it played a significant role 'in their own day-to-day lives'. The research findings did not 'really support the claim that is sometimes made that, even in rural areas with a strong hunting tradition, there is much greater opposition to hunting than is generally supposed'.⁹⁶

The report also concluded, however, that hunting 'seriously compromises the welfare of the fox'⁹⁷ and three weeks later, on 7 July 2000, the first government bill to ban the sport was introduced by the home secretary, Jack Straw. Straw's bill offered five choices for the future of the hunt: a wide-ranging ban, the status quo, a limited ban, creation of a new licensing authority or allowing local referendums on

⁸⁹ *Burns Report*, pp. 33–5.

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 58.

⁹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 66.

⁹² *Ibid.*, p. 67.

⁹³ *Ibid.*, p. 69.

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 70.

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 75.

⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 78.

⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 117.

the issue.⁹⁸ The Commons was determined on an outright ban, repeatedly voting for this over the next four years;⁹⁹ the House of Lords demonstrated an equally firm and polar opposite position, consistently rejecting the ban although eventually accepting the compromise of licensed hunting.¹⁰⁰ In 2002 a senior backbencher (Gerald Kaufman) threatened to withdraw the Labour party whip if the will of the Commons were not upheld and the rural affairs minister, Alun Michael, announced the government's willingness to use the Parliament Act to override the Lords' opposition to a total ban. The Labour Party Conference in October of the same year backed a call for the ban to be forced through Parliament. The government's preference, however, seems to have been for compromise and various attempts were made at reconciliation between the pro- and anti-hunting brigades, both within and without Parliament. In March 2002 there were government plans for a six-month consultation period aimed at reaching compromise between the two houses, while in September of that year a three-day public consultation with pro- and anti-hunting pressure groups was held at Westminster. This was another fact-finding mission, another attempt by the government, as Michael stated, to provide a 'rational approach' to future legislation.¹⁰¹ On 22 September some 400,000 demonstrators marched through central London to protest against a potential ban and the public consultation led to a proposed 'third way' compromise: a December 2002 bill which would have banned stag hunting and hare coursing but allowed fox hunting in certain areas. The bill was subsequently amended so that hunting would only be allowed for pest control rather than sport. The previous month, however, more than 160 MPs had signed a Commons motion backing an outright ban, and by June 2003 the government again agreed to allow MPs the chance to reinstate a complete ban. On 30 June the Commons voted overwhelmingly, seven cabinet members joining over 300 MPs, in favour of a total ban. In September Michael indicated that legislation on hunting would be in place by the next general election. It came as no surprise that when the bill went to the Lords a total ban was rejected and proposals allowing regulated hunts resuscitated. The upper House was warned by Lord Whitty, the environment minister, to the effect that resistance

⁹⁸ 'Straw offers five choices over the future of fox hunting', *The Guardian*, 8 July 2000.

⁹⁹ 17 January 2001, 399–155 in favour of a ban, licensed hunting rejected 382–182; 18 March 2002, 386–175 in favour of a ban; 30 June 2003; 15 September 2004, 356–166 in favour of a ban; 16 November 2004. 'Timeline: Labour and hunting', *The Guardian*, <http://politics.guardian.co.uk/homeaffairs/page/0,11026,650062,00.html> (last accessed 27 January 2011).

¹⁰⁰ 27 March 2001, 317–68 against the ban, 202–122 against licensed hunting, 249–108 in favour of the status quo; 19 March 2002, 331–74 against the ban, 366–59 in favour of licensed hunting (overturning the rejection of this option in the previous year); 21 October 2003; 26 October 2004, total ban rejected, 322–72 in favour of licensed hunting. 'Timeline: Labour and hunting'

¹⁰¹ 'Public hearing on hunting under way', *The Guardian*, 9 September 2002.

was futile but a cross-party amendment allowing registered hunting to continue was passed 261–49. The bill then ran out of parliamentary time.

The following year, on 15 September 2004, the House of Commons again voted in favour of a complete ban, albeit not before a dramatic interruption in the form of a physical invasion of the Commons by hunt supporters and members of the Countryside Alliance: Otis Ferry, son of the pop star Bryan Ferry and MFH of the South Shropshire hunt; Luke Tomlinson, a professional polo player; John Holliday, a huntsman; David Redvers, supporter of the Ledbury Hunt; Andrew Elliot, an auctioneer and former whipper-in; Nicholas Wood, a chef; Richard Wakeham, a surveyor and jockey; and Robert Thame, another professional polo player.¹⁰² Dressed in workmen's fluorescent tabards and carrying hard hats and clipboards, the eight men had pretended to be working on renovations of the House. Ferry had tipped off the BBC regarding the plan the day before but the corporation took no action and the protesters passed unchallenged through a police cordon and through St Stephen's entrance. In committee room 15 they discarded the workmen's clothes to reveal T-shirts reading 'Fcuk the Bill'. Three were stopped by doorkeepers from entering the chamber itself but five succeeded in reaching it and they forced a 20-minute suspension of proceedings. The doorkeepers, deputy speaker and MPs – understandably – feared a terrorist attack but the protest quickly dissolved into something of a shambles, Commons officials in ceremonial dress tackling the invaders, the protesters shouting and pointing fingers at ministers. Thame sat down in the prime minister's place, beside the rural affairs minister, and said, 'Right oh, let's have a debate now', but was then grabbed by a doorkeeper and led out of the chamber.¹⁰³ As MPs and the press pointed out, this was the first violent intrusion of the House since Charles I had entered on 4 January 1642 in an unsuccessful attempt to arrest five members. The invasion also prompted a (clearly needed) overhaul of security at Westminster. It did nothing, however, to prevent or delay the ban, the House of Commons voting on third reading 356 to 166 (a majority of 190) in favour of abolition. The House had already informed the Lords that the Parliament Act would be invoked if they voted against the bill.

Tory opponents of the hunting ban were quick to link it to Blair's plans for reform of the House of Lords and the threat of, and eventual resort to, the Parliament Act would serve to reinforce such views. Yet even at this late stage it looked as if some

¹⁰² For press coverage of the invasion see, e.g., 'Invasion of the Commons', *The Guardian*, 16 September 2004; 'Rock star's son and polo friend of princes among chamber invaders', *The Guardian*, 16 September 2004; 'Hunt Brawl in Commons', *The Telegraph*, 16 September 2004; 'Young and well-heeled rebels with a cause', *The Guardian*, 17 September 2004. The eight invaders were convicted in May 2005 of causing 'alarm and disorder' and given a conditional discharge for 18 months. Each man was ordered to pay costs of £350. 'Commons invaders conditionally discharged', *The Guardian*, 25 May 2005, corrected 11 June 2005.

¹⁰³ 'How lapses and luck led to fights on floor of the Commons', *The Guardian*, 24 May 2005.

compromise deal might be arranged whereby licensed hunts would be allowed if an environmental case could be made for them. On 12 October the House of Lords allowed an unopposed second reading of the bill so that it could pass through committee stage and (potentially) amended; Lord Burns, who had headed the 2000 enquiry, argued that it would be a misuse of the Parliament Act to force the existing bill through. The peers then voted, on 26 October, 322–72 for the compromise which would allow hunting under licence. Alun Michael urged acceptance of the compromise solution and the Countryside Alliance naturally urged Labour MPs to support this option, but on 16 November the Commons voted 343–175 against the Lords' position and 321–204 against Blair's compromise. The following day a defiant House of Lords voted 188 to 79 against a ban, and 175 to 85 that no change to the law should be made before December 2007.¹⁰⁴ In 1949 Tom Williams had been sufficiently astute to realise that a ban on fox hunting would not be achieved without invoking the Parliament Act, and he was proved right. On 18 November 2004 Michael Martin, then speaker of the House of Commons, invoked the Act and the total ban passed into law, coming into force on 18 February 2005.

In the *Telegraph* Philip Johnston commented that the 'refusal of peers to accept the will of the Commons had been an incendiary issue' since 1911, and 'leaving aside the arguments over class or animal welfare, the foxhunting issue ended up as a constitutional clash between the elected Commons and the unelected Lords. There was only going to be one winner ... Hunting essentially became the touchstone for the supremacy and sovereignty of the Lower House ...'.¹⁰⁵ In the *Guardian* an exasperated Polly Toynbee wrote,

The Parliament Act was first used by Lloyd George in 1911 for real class war. He bulldozed through brave new taxes in the most radical budgets to start up the welfare state. He forced through pensions, sick pay and national assistance for the destitute against the strongly armed self-interests of the rich. That should be a sobering reminder for New Labour ... The Parliament Act might be used for similar historic acts – for imposing land taxes to capture the vast untaxed wealth of soaring property values or for windfalling the City fat cats' obscene greed. Instead history will record years of discord over a rural absurdity that will make us the laughing stock of the world. What was Labour's enduring battle? Not taxes but foxes.¹⁰⁶

¹⁰⁴ 'Timeline: Labour and hunting'. See also Woods, Table 6.2, 'Key dates in the hunting debate, 1997–2005', p. 110.

¹⁰⁵ Philip Johnston, 'Three forces that trapped the hunt', *The Telegraph*, 22 November 2004.

¹⁰⁶ Polly Toynbee, 'Not civil war but treason', *The Guardian*, 17 September 2004. For another comparison of the 1909 and 2004 clashes between the upper and lower Houses, see 'Class divide', *The Guardian*, 11 October 2004.

The Ban: ‘accidental policy outcome’?¹⁰⁷

As Richard Thomas commented in his study of the politics of hunting, ‘the three constituent elements’ of the debate over fox hunting within the Labour party, ‘the party membership, the backbench MPs and the party leadership, did not move together ...’.¹⁰⁸ This proved as true in the 1990s and the early twenty-first century as it was in 1983. Backbenchers had always been the proactive element in Parliament where hunting was concerned, whereas Labour governments had repeatedly hesitated to commit themselves to a ban. The issue receives little, if any, attention in histories of the Labour Party, and Tony Blair – who did have decided views on the abolition of hereditary peers – had no such feelings about fox hunting. Blair seems to have shared Tom Williams’s reluctance to legislate against the pastimes of others, and came to regret ‘stupidly’ giving ‘the impression’ that hunting would be banned by his government. His press secretary, Alastair Campbell, reported in his diaries that the then prime minister believed a ban to be ‘basically illiberal’ and Blair himself revealed his unhappiness in memoirs published after he left office, acknowledging the ‘grief’ fox hunting had caused him and speaking of his bewilderment at the ‘primeval’ passions the ‘wretched business’ aroused. He himself didn’t ‘feel it’ either way. He had read Trollope, he understood that fox hunting was a part of England’s past, but he could not identify with the extent to which it was imbedded in the rural present. Neither could he identify with those who wanted to ban hunting on the grounds of cruelty. But the more he learned about hunting, he claimed, the ‘more uneasy’ he became about attempting to impose a ban. Ultimately, he came to the conclusion that fox hunters weren’t ‘a small clique of weirdo inbreds’ who enjoyed inflicting cruelty, and that hunting was ‘less elitist’ than he had once presumed; it was not the preserve merely of ‘dukes and duchesses’. According to his own version of events he deliberately worked to secure a compromise by which the ban would curtail cruelty but not put an end to the sport. Hunting would continue – as indeed it has. And it remained, he said, a piece of legislation that he regretted.¹⁰⁹

While the ban was thrust upon Blair, the pressure came principally from within his own party rather from public opinion or the activities of the Countryside Alliance. It was arguably, as Michael Woods describes it, something of a ‘bartering chip’ to be used to woo or placate MPs who disagreed with him on other policy issues, such as foundation hospitals or, more critically, the war with Iraq.¹¹⁰ The

¹⁰⁷ The phrase is taken from Woods, p. 95.

¹⁰⁸ Thomas, p. 200.

¹⁰⁹ Alastair Campbell, *The Blair Years: Extracts from the Alastair Campbell Diaries* (New York, 2007), p. 488; Tony Blair, *A Journey: My Political Life* (New York, 2010), pp. 304–307. See also Alastair Campbell, *The Alastair Campbell Diaries, Volume Three: Power and Responsibility, 1999–2001* (London, 2011), pp. 89, 342 and 357.

¹¹⁰ Woods, p. 109. Philip Johnston had commented to similar effect a few days after the ban had been voted; see ‘Three forces that trapped the hunt’. Kate Hoey made the

2004 ban has been identified as ‘one of the clearest examples of backbench influence in the post-war period’.¹¹¹ Woods’s characterisation of the 2004 outcome is also astute: ‘The hunting ban will stand as one of the historic achievements of New Labour. Yet, it is in many ways a distinctly non-New Labour policy. It has some hallmarks of New Labour thinking, notably modernisation and liberal humanitarianism ... [but it] offended New Labour sensibilities on consensus-building, evidence-based policy making and personal choice’.¹¹²

Conclusion: Labour, Class and Cruelty

Writing in the early 1980s, Richard Thomas commented that fox hunting at that time appeared ‘to most urban dwellers a distant and insignificant issue, a fact which works on balance to the benefit of the hunting community, for, if the anti-hunting community successfully convinced people that hunting was a manifestation of class oppression, it might quickly become a casualty of the class war’.¹¹³ Instead, he argued, the ability of the sport to attract a new elite, and to be relatively socially inclusive, had reduced ‘overt class antagonism to a minor issue, so that it is rarely mentioned by either side when hunting is being debated’.¹¹⁴ This situation would change in the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries as the condemnation of ‘feudal’ sports or ‘gothic barbarism’ voiced in the early nineteenth century resurfaced with a vengeance within New Labour. Hunting did indeed become a casualty of class warfare.

The Burns committee had acknowledged that some of the opposition to fox hunting came from ‘those who perceive hunting as representing a divisive social class system’.¹¹⁵ Shortly before the ban was imposed George Monbiot stated more emphatically in the *Guardian*, ‘There is one thing on which both sides agree: hunting is not a class issue’:

The hunters claim that it’s no longer the preserve of the aristocracy. Labour MPs insist that their determination to ban it has nothing to do with the social order: it’s about animals. Both sides are wrong. This is class war.

...

same point in a 2006 interview with *The Guardian*: see ‘Animal Instincts’, *The Guardian*, 1 March 2006.

¹¹¹ Philip Cowley and Mark Stuart, ‘Parliament’, in Anthony Seldon and Dennis Kavanagh (eds), *The Blair Effect 2001–5* (Cambridge, 2005), p. 27, quoted in Woods, p. 112.

¹¹² Woods, p. 113.

¹¹³ Thomas, p. 182.

¹¹⁴ Ibid., p. 183.

¹¹⁵ *Burns Report*, p. 70.

As an animal welfare issue, foxhunting comes in at about number 155. It probably ranks below the last of the great working-class bloodsports, coarse fishing. It's insignificant beside intensive pig farming, chicken keeping or even the rearing of pheasants for driven shoots. But as a class issue, it ranks behind private schooling at number two. This isn't about animal welfare. It's about human welfare. By taking on the hunt, our MPs are taking on those who ran the country for 800 years, and still run the countryside today. This class war began with the Norman conquest. It still needs to be fought.¹¹⁶

Labour MP (and unpaid parliamentary private secretary to rural affairs minister Alun Michael) Peter Bradley spoke in similar terms after the ban had been secured. Acknowledging that the debate was in part about animal welfare and the liberty of the subject, he also described it as class war and claimed that the real issue was who governed Britain. The landowners, he said, had been forced to realise that they no longer ran the country, a realisation which made them very angry.¹¹⁷

While supporters of the hunt continued to emphasise its egalitarianism, Bradley's statement indicates the extent to which fox hunting retained aristocratic associations. An article published in the *Telegraph* the day after the ban had been passed by Parliament raised the issue of 'class war' and at least insinuated that some MPs had viewed the bill as revenge for the Conservative government's defeat of the miners in the 1980s.¹¹⁸ A week later David Aaronovitch expressed exasperation that the working-class Bryan Ferry had married a socialite and sent his children to public schools, and called Otis Ferry 'a toffee-nosed little git'.¹¹⁹ Fox hunting, unlike the game laws, may have 'softened' the class system but it also 'perpetuated' it,¹²⁰ and such perpetuation eventually led to sustained attack from New Labour's backbenches. The rise of humanitarian sentiment and the animal rights movement initiated opposition to fox hunting and consistently underpinned

¹¹⁶ 'Class war on the hoof: Foxhunting is a remnant of feudal society – and that is why we have to ban it', *The Guardian*, 14 September 2004. In an article published in 1995 Monbiot had spelled out the class tensions inherent in hunting from the Norman ties. See 'Upfront: Hunting for an answer – Today the Commons debates fox-hunting', *The Guardian*, 3 March 1995.

¹¹⁷ 'Yes – this is about class war', *The Telegraph*, 22 November 2004; 'Hunt ban is class war, admits MP', *The Guardian*, 22 November 2004; 'There's nothing like a bit of class war', *The Guardian*, 23 November 2004. See also Toynbee; 'Crusade against hunting is class war, says duke', *The Telegraph*, 12 August 1999; 'Class divide', *The Guardian*, 11 October 2004.

¹¹⁸ 'We owe it to the people to reverse this ban, say Tories', *The Telegraph*, 16 September 2004. For many Labour MPs fox hunters undoubtedly looked like the Tory party on horseback.

¹¹⁹ 'There's nothing like a bit of class war'.

¹²⁰ I have reversed the order of a quotation from Roger Scruton: the original reads, fox hunting 'seemed both to perpetuate the class system, and also to soften it'. Roger Scruton, *On Hunting* (London, 1998), p. xii.

public feeling, but the parliamentary ban achieved in the early twenty-first century owed primarily to a politics which turned on class.

‘In Britain today’, George Monbiot had written in 1995,

our interactions with animals could scarcely be shallower. We buy parts of them wrapped in clingfilm in the supermarket fridge or incorporated into microwave meals. We treat them as substitutes for children, spending, as a nation, more money on Tiddles and Rover than we do on foreign aid. And we dress up in quasi-military uniforms, with all the expense and hierarchy of battle, to pursue some poor scrap of a creature as if human life depended on its capture ... all three modes of engagement are equally fruitless and perverse. All are symptoms of our estrangement from the ecosystem, of a gradual loss of meaningful involvement with both our food and our natural enemies.¹²¹

In that same article, however, he also linked resistance to hunting to resentment of aristocratic privilege. By 2004, feudalism had become the primary issue.¹²²

The focus on the welfare of the fox, as opposed, for example, to factory farming, was also rooted in conceptions of British – more specifically, English – identity. Deputy Prime Minister John Prescott dismissed fox hunting as an issue that had no resonance with twenty-first-century Britain. Brian Walden, a non-hunting former Labour MP who opposed the ban because of his belief in liberty and dislike of busybodies, noted the continued association of hunters and the squirearchy, an association promoted by their antiquated dress.¹²³ Philip Johnston wrote in similar terms: ‘The problem for the hunts is that they smacked of Old Britain and, for New Labour, Old Britain was clapped out and passé’.¹²⁴

Ironically, soon after the ban the British public was asked to vote on archetypal English institutions: fox hunting topped the list. The imprint of fox hunting on the popular imagination has yet to fade. And as we shall see in the next chapter, where New Labour condemned fox hunting as a sport long past its sell-by date, others embraced and celebrated it precisely because it was an anachronism, symbolic of a vanished world.

¹²¹ ‘Upfront: Hunting for an answer’.

¹²² A contributing factor to this development may have been the marked increase in social inequality in Britain, and widening gulf between rich and poor.

¹²³ ‘Hunting a minority issue? Tell that to the 400,000 country marchers, Mr Prescott’, *The Telegraph*, 24 November 2004; ‘Ban on foxhunting would be a triumph for the mob’, *The Telegraph*, 22 November 2004.

¹²⁴ ‘Three forces that trapped the hunt’.

This page has been left blank intentionally

Chapter 6

The Flight from Modernity: Nostalgia and the Hunt

... pastoral is essentially nostalgic and melancholic, containing an implicit contrast between the real present state of things and things as they once were ... In terms of modern pastoral, this can be not only the longing for a lost time or a lost innocence, but also for something which can never be found.

Katherine Swift, *The Morville Hours*, p. 203

Introduction

The hard-won legal ban did not signal the end of fox hunting. Over 250 hunts hosted a traditional Boxing Day meet in 2005 and record numbers of spectators gathered to cheer them on, just as they had gathered for the last legal hunt.¹ The following year 314 registered hunts met on Boxing Day.² According to the *Telegraph*, on the second anniversary of the date (18 February 2005) on which the ban took effect, while 10 per cent of some 322 packs reported that their numbers were down, none had gone out of business and 34 per cent reported an increase in subscribers.³ The Countryside Alliance, which had organised mass rallies in an attempt to prevent the ban and made various unsuccessful legal challenges to the Act in the courts, continues to urge its repeal. Arguably, the ban only hardened a determination amongst at least a portion of the English public to keep the tradition of fox hunting alive – although again, ‘tradition’ has been modified.⁴ Hunts have routinely exploited loopholes in the law to allow the activity to continue. The first line of the act reads, ‘A person commits an offence if he hunts a wild mammal with a dog, unless his hunting is exempt’.⁵ The exemptions, listed in Schedule 1, include flushing a wild mammal from cover to enable a bird of prey to hunt it: some hunts,

¹ See, e.g., ‘Thousands turn out to defy hunting ban’, *The Guardian*, 27 December 2005; ‘Stars and sun cheer Bicester’s last hunt’, *The Observer*, 20 February 2005.

² ‘Lobby group to target illegal fox hunting’, *The Guardian*, 26 December 2006.

³ ‘I can’t believe it’s not hunting ...’ *The Telegraph*, 18 February 2007. See also ‘Has the hunt outfoxed the law?’, *The Telegraph*, 25 December 2008.

⁴ See, e.g., ‘Has hunting ban renewed interest in a threatened way of life?’ *The Telegraph*, 5 November 2008. One effect of the ban appears to have been another increase in female participation, and at the highest levels, with more women becoming Masters. See ‘Ban leads more women to hunt’, *The Observer*, 15 February 2006.

⁵ *Hunting Act 2004*, c. 37, s. 1.

including the Cottesmore, purchased eagles.⁶ Hunts may also use two dogs to flush quarry to be shot, and they are permitted to deploy a full pack of hounds to follow a scent trail (laid with a sock filled with fox guts, or with fox urine – imported in some cases from America), or for exercise. ‘Accidents’, of course, happen, and in 2006 Exmoor Foxhounds huntsman Tony Wright was convicted of illegal hunting and fined £500 plus costs.⁷ The law has proved notoriously difficult to police, however, and prosecutions, let alone convictions, are rare.

While the continued fierce attachment to the sport is uncontestable, the attractions of fox hunting have changed demonstrably over time. Beckford’s reaction to post-ban hunting can easily be imagined. ‘The whole art of fox-hunting’, he wrote in 1781, is

to keep the hounds well in *blood*; *sport* is but a secondary consideration with a true fox-hunter. The first is, the killing of the fox, – hence arises the eagerness of pursuit and the chief pleasure of the chase. I confess I esteem blood so necessary to a pack of fox-hounds, that, with regard to myself, I always return home better pleased with an indifferent chase, with death at the end of it, than with the best chase possible if it ends with the loss of the fox.⁸

Beckford, however, was something of a purist and by the mid-nineteenth century other motivations had been identified. ‘People hunt from various motives’, wrote Surtees in 1853, ‘some for the love of the thing – some for show – some for fashion – some for health – some for appetites – some for coffee-housing – some to say they have hunted – some because others hunt’.⁹ Trollope added to the catalogue 12 years later. The first article following the introduction to his *Hunting Sketches* (1865), originally published in the *Pall Mall Gazette*, was titled, ‘The Man who Hunts – and Doesn’t Like It’, and in it Trollope (who liked it very much indeed) noted that the names and numbers of those who fell within this category were ‘legion’. ‘Dear old John Leech [the famous illustrator of Surtees]!’, he continued, ‘What an eye he had’ for such people.¹⁰ The man who hunts and doesn’t like it

finds it pleasant to talk of his horses, especially to young women, with whom, perhaps, the ascertained fact of his winter employment does give him some credit. It is still something to be a hunting man even yet, though the multiplicity of railways and the existing plethora of money has so increased the number of

⁶ ‘The banned rode on’, *The Guardian*, 7 November 2006.

⁷ ‘Man found guilty of illegal fox hunting’, *The Guardian*, 4 August 2006; ‘Rethink ahead as huntsman is fined for breaking ban’, *The Guardian*, 5 August 2006; ‘Guilty verdict for first huntsman brought to court’, *The Telegraph*, 5 August 2006.

⁸ Peter Beckford, *Thoughts on Hunting* (London, 1781), p. 179.

⁹ Robert Surtees, *Mr Sponge’s Sporting Tour* (1853; Stroud, UK, 2006), p. 348.

¹⁰ Anthony Trollope, *Hunting Sketches* (1865; New York, 1952), p. 42.

sportsmen, that to keep a nag or two near some well-known station, is nearly as common as to die. But the delight of these martyrs is at the highest in the presence of their tailors; or, higher still, perhaps, in that of their bootmakers.

It is also nice, on hunting mornings, 'to find himself bright with mahogany tops, buff-tinted breeches, and a pink coat ... he feels that he has placed himself in the vanguard of society by thus shining in his apparel. And he will ride this year! ... He will ride straight; – and, if possible, he will like it'.¹¹ But he does not. He is frightened, unhappy and uncomfortable, riding for a fall and usually finding one.

In mid-nineteenth-century England the reasons for fox hunting were various and included fashion, snobbery and social climbing as well as a continued, traditional fascination with the working of hounds on a scent and the newer cravings for speed, excitement and competitive riding. By that century's end Alice Hayes commented to the effect that in earlier times people had hunted because they enjoyed it, but in her own time it had become 'a means to an end, a passport to good society, a fashion rather than a taste'.¹² In the subsequent century the attractions of hunting would change again. When Trollope's *Sketches* were reissued in 1952 Lionel Edwards, the famous sporting artist, mused in his introduction respecting this particular article whether Trollope's assessment remained true, and suggested that two world wars had put an end to those who hunted because it was fashionable.¹³ In explaining the falling off of such participants he pointed chiefly to expense but also acknowledged the increased diversity of competing amusements. Another 20 years would provide anyone preferring not to hunt with a new rationalisation: by the mid-seventies, as we have seen, the moral crusade against hunting as a cruel and feudal sport was in full swing. Hunting, however, continued. How can we explain its popularity?

The arguments advanced in support of fox hunting from 1997 merged the old and the new. Foxes are vermin which need to be controlled; hunting is embedded within rural society and the rural economy; hunting offers healthy, outdoor recreation. The continuation of the sport also promotes conservation of the environment: foxes kill endangered species of birds; hunters champion the preservation of hedgerows and woodlands, allowing wildlife to thrive. The twentieth century, however, was also notable for the development of a nostalgic politics of the hunt. The romantic, nostalgic appeal of fox hunting, which did not exist in Beckford's time, can partially be explained as a reaction to the carnage of modern warfare. Fox hunting was adopted as a symbol of what the British had been fighting to preserve, hunting now regarded as an 'authentic fragment' of England as it existed before the fracture of the First World War.¹⁴ But as

¹¹ Ibid., pp. 44–6.

¹² Alice Hayes, *The Horsewoman: A Practical Guide to Side-Saddle Riding*, 2nd ed. (New York, 1903), p. 76.

¹³ *Hunting Sketches*, intro. Lionel Edwards, pp. 18–19.

¹⁴ Lionel Edwards, intro., Trollope, *Hunting Sketches*, p. 32.

the twentieth century progressed the sport would also come to be associated with a contracting rural world, bound up in a more broad-ranging nostalgia for pre-industrial England.

Other than a few casual references to mining settlements, urban, industrialising England was completely ignored by Surtees. Yet England *was* industrial and increasingly urban, even in his day. Such change provoked anxiety, and true England, the real England, was located in the disappearing countryside. Anti-industrial English pastoralism is a much broader social phenomenon and many of its adherents in the later Victorian and Edwardian periods belonged to the teetotal, anti-hunting, vegetarian, socialist, ‘simple life’ fraternity. Edward Carpenter (1844–1929) is a prime example in this regard.¹⁵ But for others, fox hunting became emblematic of an Englishness threatened by industrialisation, urbanisation, and, in the twentieth century, mechanisation, as the motor car replaced the horse as a means of transport. Dale ended his 1899 history of the Belvoir on a note of wistfulness and regret:

Thus, then, we leave the history of the Belvoir Hunt. The closing scenes may give rise to a sigh for the country life of England passing away from us, perhaps for ever. Yet, though we know we cannot stay the movement which is sweeping away so much that is beautiful and picturesque from our midst, we cannot but look back on the life and sports of a day that is past with a pleasure largely mingled with regret at the inevitable change.¹⁶

Surtees owes his twentieth-century reputation precisely to this nostalgic impulse. In the early twenty-first century the passionate commitment to and defences of hunting offered by philosopher Roger Scruton, MFH and Commons invader Otis Ferry and sporting journalist Rory Knight Bruce demonstrate a similar longing for the pre-industrial landscape and an idealised past.

Ultimately, it is the eighteenth-century landscape which is celebrated, an England in which nature had been tamed by man but not yet spoiled. The emergence of this landscape coincided with the emergence of the sport of fox hunting – as well as, ironically, the concept of ‘nostalgia’ itself. From 1756 the word was used to describe a form of homesickness, a longing for familiar surroundings; by 1900 its meaning had broadened to include ‘sentimental longing *for* or regretful memory of a period of the past, esp. one in an individual’s own lifetime; (also) sentimental imagining or evocation of a period of the past’.¹⁷

¹⁵ See Sheila Rowbotham, *Edward Carpenter: A Life of Liberty and Love* (London, 2009).

¹⁶ T.H. Dale, *The History of the Belvoir Hunt* (Westminster, 1899), p. 334.

¹⁷ *OED*.

Nostalgia for a Pre-war World

Nostalgia informs a cluster of appreciative studies of Surtees published literally one on top of the other in the early 1930s: F.J. Harvey Darton's *From Surtees to Sassoon: Some English Contrasts (1838–1928)* (1931), Anthony Steel's *Jorrocks's England* (1932) and Frederick Watson's *Robert Smith Surtees: A Critical Study* (1933). Looking back across the divide of the Great War Darton commented, 'our world is no longer theirs. Theirs seemed to be "fracted and corroborate", like a child's toy broken and thrown away'. In hunting he recognised an 'authentic ... fragment' of that world.¹⁸ Steel, while making no direct reference to the war, pointed in his introduction to 'a reality' in Surtees 'which is increasingly strange to us', and in his final paragraph argued that there is 'good reason for recalling a vanished phase of English life'.¹⁹ Watson's study was dedicated to his brother Henry: 'killed at Ypres March 6, 1915. A fox-hunting man'.²⁰ Unappreciated in his own time, in the early twentieth century Surtees became 'familiar and beloved', according to Darton, because he provided his readers, wherever they were in the world, with 'a corner of England'.²¹ The attachment continued: reprints of Surtees' work accelerated during the Second World War, with a bookshop in Colombo in Ceylon 'able to dispose of large numbers of copies to members of the Allied Forces stationed in that island during the last stages of the war with Japan'.²²

If the profoundly unsentimental Surtees acquired a nostalgic appeal in the post-war period, new writers also emerged whose very impetus in writing was nostalgia: John Masefield and Siegfried Sassoon. *Reynard the Fox*, discussed in Chapter 4, was Masefield's 'Great War poem', celebrating 'a pre-war continuity within the English countryside and rural community'.²³ The literary critic John Middleton Murry argued in an essay published in 1920 that Masefield's 'self-appointed end' was 'the glorification of England in narrative verse'²⁴ and the poem is commonly acknowledged as a reaction to the horrors of the First World War.²⁵ His nostalgia clearly touched a contemporary nerve, the first reprint of the poem appearing within a month of the original edition of 3,000 copies. By 1946 there had been eight English reprints as well as limited and illustrated limited

¹⁸ F.J. Harvey Darton, *From Surtees to Sassoon: Some English Contrasts (1838–1928)* (London, 1931), p. 32.

¹⁹ Anthony Steel, *Jorrocks's England* (London, 1932), pp. 8, 294.

²⁰ Frederick Watson, *Robert Smith Surtees: A Critical Study* (London, 1933).

²¹ Darton, pp. 28–9.

²² Robert L. Collison, 'R.S. Surtees: Satirist and Sociologist', *Nineteenth-Century Fiction*, 7/3 (1952): pp. 202–7 at p. 202.

²³ Philip W. Errington, 'Introduction', John Masefield, *Reynard the Fox* (London, 2008), p. vii. Born in 1878, Masefield was most decidedly a Victorian rather than a modern.

²⁴ John Middleton Murry, 'The Nostalgia of Mr Masefield', in *Aspects of Literature* (London, 1920), p. 166.

²⁵ The pain occasioned by the war was anticipated in a poem titled 'August, 1914'.

editions, a standard illustrated edition, a cheap illustrated edition (also reprinted) and an extra-limited deluxe edition.²⁶ Further editions followed, the most recent (2008) introduced by Masfield scholar and bibliographer Philip W. Errington. The poem, as Errington notes, was an A-level set text in the 1953 and adapted for broadcast by the BBC in the 1950s, the 1960s and again in 1984.

In the Great War Masfield himself was not a soldier – aged 36 when war broke out, he was too old for the army – but worked with the British Red Cross in the Dardanelles, as an orderly in a hospital for the French wounded and with the American Ambulance Service. His *Gallipoli* (1916) is regarded as ‘one of the finest accounts we have of modern warfare’;²⁷ he also wrote on the Somme in *The Old Front Line* (1917) and *The Battle of the Somme* (1919). *Reynard the Fox*, however, like *Right Royal* (1920) and his hunting novel, *The Hawbucks* (1929), is set in the pre-war world.

Masfield was no Beckford. He had never ridden to hounds and had no interest in the ‘science’ of hunting. But he grew up in hunting country and often followed on foot or bicycle as a child, learning by heart both the countryside and ‘the workings of a fox’s mind’. ‘I wrote my tale of the Fox because I felt deeply the beauty and the life of hunting’, he said in 1920.²⁸ In later years he also made explicit the link between the poem and the War, writing in a note to the 1946 edition that it was, in part, ‘an attempt to understand the mind of a shy wild animal when sorely beset’ but also intended to symbolise ‘the free soul of humanity’ which had narrowly escaped extinction during the war.²⁹ In 1962 he commented similarly,

though the hunted fox was my subject, it was but the image of my subject. For more than four years before I wrote, something primitive, wild, beautiful and strange in the Spirit of Man had been pursued through most of Europe with the threat of death. It had survived the chase, but as a hunted fox may survive a long run, to lie panting somewhere till the heart stops beating. It was my hope that my Fox’s heart should not stop beating.³⁰

Siegfried Sassoon, who had amused himself as a young man by parodying Masfield’s verse,³¹ similarly invoked the pre-war hunting world with nostalgia in his ‘lightly fictionalized autobiography’ published in 1928 under the title *Memoirs*

²⁶ Errington, ‘Introduction’, p. xi.

²⁷ *ODNB*.

²⁸ Letter to A.H. Higginson, 1920, repr. in Errington (ed.), Masfield, *Reynard the Fox*, p. 71.

²⁹ Repr. *ibid.*, p. 88.

³⁰ ‘Introduction’, *Dauber & Reynard the Fox*, repr. in Errington (ed.), Masfield, *Reynard the Fox*, p. 109.

³¹ For all the mockery, however, Sassoon also acknowledged that it was while ‘burlesquing’ Masfield that he first became aware of his own delight in writing, and of his ability to ‘imbue commonplace details with warmth of poetic emotion’. Quoted in

of a Fox-Hunting Man. Like *Reynard the Fox* this 'elegy for a way of life which had gone for ever' was instantly popular, winning both the Hawthornden and the James Tait Black memorial prizes.³² The hunting literature of the previous century colours Sassoon's memoir and his affection for Surtees in particular pre-dates the war itself. The *Memoirs*, as Darton notes, are 'a backward reverie' into his personal boyhood rather than a wider lost world.³³ With a close friend Sassoon had developed a Surteesian game – heavily influenced by Jorrocks – that involved mimicking the novelist's mid-Victorian speech; the two men also delighted in the fact that many of the subscribers to their own hunt might easily have been lifted from Surtees' novels.³⁴ Other literary parallels were drawn as well: the Reverend Harry Colwood he describes as 'a composite portrait of Charles Kingsley and Matthew Arnold' (Kingsley dominated this portrait), while 'The Colonel' who attends Colwood's church (and owns 27 pairs of top boots!) personified 'the Whyte-Melville standard'.³⁵

'Englishness'

Trollope confidently asserted in 1868, 'We doubt whether, of all our national amusements, hunting is not the most thoroughly English ...'.³⁶ In 1919 Masefield's *Reynard* was identified as 'one of the most English poems ever written',³⁷ and by the 1930s the association – indeed the positive equation – of fox hunting and a quintessential Englishness was firmly established. While this equation had not been immediate, a faint, early stirring of it can be detected in Beckford: 'A rural life, I think, is better suited to this country than to any other; because the country in England affords pleasures and amusements unknown in other countries; and because its rival, our English town (or ton) life, perhaps is a less pleasant one than may be found elsewhere'.³⁸ Even at this early date, 'England' was rural. In the nineteenth century, when the field was overwhelmingly male, fox hunting was often associated with a particular type of Englishness: masculine, or 'manly', and robust. William Windham, who fought to preserve both bull baiting and fox hunting because they were part of England's heritage, 'was above all things

Constance Babington Smith, *John Masefield: A Life* (New York, 1978), p. 111. The poem in question was not *Reynard* but *The Everlasting Mercy*.

³² ODNB.

³³ Darton, pp. 82–3.

³⁴ Siegfried Sassoon, *Memoirs of a Fox-Hunting Man* (1928; London, 1980), pp. 132–3.

³⁵ Ibid., p. 143.

³⁶ Anthony Trollope, 'On Hunting', in *British Sports and Pastimes, 1868* (London, 1868), p. 70.

³⁷ [Lucas], *Times Literary Supplement*, 23 October 1919, p. 586.

³⁸ Beckford, p. 323.

anxious to preserve untainted the National Character, and even those National Manners which long habit had associated with that character'.³⁹ His contemporary John Cook argued that without fox hunting, 'instead of the hardy, open-hearted, liberal-minded Briton, you would see nothing but an effeminate race'.⁴⁰ Hunters were once also soldiers, and vice versa. The eighth Duke of Beaufort, in his history of the sport, noted that throughout the Peninsular campaign, 'Wellington always kept a pack of hounds at headquarters, and chased the foxes quite as vigorously and successfully as he did the French'.⁴¹ Dale, looking back to the early days of fox hunting, described the sons of eighteenth-century squires who typically peopled the field as 'a manly race, who became soldiers or sailors'; 'we may, too, note how the struggle with France stimulated Englishmen of all classes to take part in manly exercises, and thus favoured the rise of fox-hunting'.⁴² John Eardley Eardley-Wilmot argued that the 'manly exercise' of fox hunting would in turn enable the men who participated in this 'image of war' to defend Britain from any foreign aggression.⁴³ The equation of hunting and (a male) Englishness in its early days even extended to the fox itself. When the local fox population thinned, foxes were imported from France. Such imports – 'mongrel-bred vermin' – were deemed a poor substitute for the real thing and accused of promoting degeneracy of the English fox. Nineteenth-century MFH Osbaldeston, although, unlike Surtees' Facey Romford, willing to hunt bag foxes, stipulated that they must be 'old English foxes, no damned French dunghills'.⁴⁴ The ultimate 'French dunghill' had much earlier (1803) been portrayed in a Gillray cartoon in which George III as huntsman, shouting 'Tally-ho!', triumphantly holds a fox above his hounds: Napoleon's head has been grafted onto its body.⁴⁵ The hounds' collars are inscribed, Nelson, Sydney S. Gardner and Cornwallis; William Pitt is galloping towards them on horseback.

The conflation of Englishness and fox hunting would intensify in the twentieth century but it would also shift in emphasis, references to 'manliness' and the anti-French prejudice gradually giving way to nostalgia for the English countryside. Again, early instances of this can be detected in the nineteenth century. Whyte-Melville commented on the natural world enjoyed via pursuit of the fox,

³⁹ William Windham, *The Windham Papers: The Life and Correspondence of William Windham, 1750–1810*, ed. Lord Rosebery (2 vols, London, 1913), vol. 2, p. 371.

⁴⁰ John Cook, *Observations on Fox-hunting* (1826; London, 1922), p. 101.

⁴¹ Beaufort, *Hunting*, 4th ed. (London, 1888), p. 10.

⁴² Dale, pp. 76, 84.

⁴³ *A Famous Fox-Hunter: Reminiscences of the Late Thomas Assheton Smith, Esq., or the Pursuits of an English Country Gentleman* (London, 1893), pp. 188–9.

⁴⁴ Quoted in E.W. Bovill, *English Country Life, 1780–1830* (London, 1962), p. 216.

⁴⁵ 'Death of the Corsican fox – Scene the last of the Royal-Hunt'. I am grateful to my (appropriately named) colleague Pierre Claude Reynard for bringing this cartoon to my attention.

the remote scenes we should perhaps never visit for their own sake, the broken sunlight glinting through copse and gleaming on fern, the woodland sights, the woodland sounds, the balmy odours of nature, and all the treats she provides for her votaries, tasted and enjoyed, with every faculty roused, every sense sharpened in the excitement of our pursuit.⁴⁶

Such 'remote scenes' were increasingly foregrounded and celebrated in studies of fox hunting published after the First World War.

Hunting, Darton mused, belonged to the pre-war world and should have disappeared – but it hadn't. In *From Surtees to Sassoon* he attempted to explain why it hadn't, and why writers such as Masefield and Sassoon had each 'striven to give their best art to a great branch of sport which has not, on the whole, produced great literature'.⁴⁷ The twentieth-century writers, he argued, had 'been moved ... by England itself, seen in that sport as if through the wrong end of a telescope'.⁴⁸ Steel would make a similar claim for Surtees:

We may call his work a rude photography, a series of early daguerreotypes, all made by a single camera with a slightly distorted lens. The simile does less than justice to the vivid colours which are to be found in him, but it will serve. It will help to press the point that without any highfalutin claims to be great Art or Literature, Surtees' novels will none the less endure, because they are sober honest work, firmly grounded in an observed reality.⁴⁹

Watson wrote in the same vein,

To the present century Surtees remains the classic novelist on fox-hunting. But his net has, in these days of less stringent moralities, drawn in a substantial body of readers who know nothing whatever about horses or hounds. He was – and here we are on solid ground – intensely *national*. Few novelists – unless it be Trollope or Kingsley – have been so representative of the English temperament.⁵⁰

The appeal of Masefield and Sassoon between the wars owed to the same sentiment. *Reynard the Fox* was described as 'part of an Englishman's soul'; *Memoirs of a Fox-Hunting Man* was 'not a diary of hunts' but 'a picture of England'.⁵¹ 'All that pageant of the past, and of little things jumbled with great, of affection and experience and fancy', wrote Darton, 'is what, for me, Sassoon creates unerringly and faithfully in almost every page of his two prose books.

⁴⁶ George J. Whyte-Melville, *Riding Recollections* (1875; London, n.d.), p. 227.

⁴⁷ Darton, p. 6.

⁴⁸ Ibid.

⁴⁹ Steel, p. 295.

⁵⁰ Watson, p. 266 (emphasis in the original).

⁵¹ Darton, pp. 52 and 54.

I think the England he suggests is the England he and other poets would like to have back, to ensure it and make it firm for ever'.⁵² 'It does not seem to me quite just to suggest', Darton continues, 'that ... sentiment about "England" is mere vagueness. It sprang originally, no doubt, from the public school tradition ... And no doubt that tradition, long before the War, had tended to fade into a genteel and even arid snobbishness. But it was at bottom real, and was felt in real strength when the occasion arose'. 'It is odd', he said, 'to reflect that it did not exist, as we know it, in the days of Jorrocks'.⁵³

The significance not merely of the countryside but specifically of hunting to English identity was fundamental to Darton, who located an element common to Surtees, Sassoon and Masefield that he labelled 'Englishness', although he could only define the concept 'obliquely'.⁵⁴ But he was aware that the issue had not figured largely in earlier discussions of the sport: Surtees' generation, unlike that of Masefield and Sassoon, did not stop to consider either their attraction to fox hunting or their national identity. Twentieth-century authors 'thought sincerely, searchingly, and not unaffectionately, about simple open-air emotions which their predecessors in describing similar scenes usually took for granted and never analysed psychologically'.⁵⁵ While diverse eighteenth-century foreigners dissected Englishness at some length,⁵⁶ the English themselves, as Paul Langford has noted, did not begin to examine their 'national character' until the 1830s. Surtees was not among those early pioneers. But Darton, looking back, found his evidence of the English character in literature: 'A hundred years ago it was much easier than it is today to say what was not English. You found your average plain Englishman in Surtees and a little later in Trollope and Dickens, and anything which offended his social sense was not English, except when it was ludicrous, like Jorrocks, or comic, like Sam Weller'.⁵⁷

By Darton's time fox hunting was championed as 'a priceless heritage of English life'. In 1930, for example, Charles Frederick, one-time master of the Pytchley, happily quoted the archdeacon of Northampton in his Lonsdale Library history of the sport: hunting was 'no mere pastime, but something that went much deeper into English life and brought out and expressed that which was best in the life, heart, and soul of English people – something that was clean, straight, energetic, and unselfish'.⁵⁸ In the mid-twentieth-century parliamentary debates over the future

⁵² Ibid., pp. 117–18.

⁵³ Ibid., p. 137.

⁵⁴ Ibid., p. 61.

⁵⁵ Ibid., p. 6.

⁵⁶ See, e.g., Paul Langford, *Englishness Identified: Manners and Character, 1650–1850* (Oxford, 2000).

⁵⁷ Darton, p. 192.

⁵⁸ Sir Charles Frederick, *Fox-hunting* (London, 1930), p. 17. The archdeacon's remarks were made during the dedication of a memorial at Creaton, Northampton, to a sportsman, and reported in the *Northampton Herald*.

of fox hunting the same point was made: the sport was ‘characteristically English’ and part of the ‘traditional life’ of the country.⁵⁹ The tenth Duke of Beaufort argued the same point in 1980. In Chapter 18 of his book, in which he offers ‘A Defence of Fox-hunting’, the first argument put forward is tradition.⁶⁰ Stephen Hastings, a former chairman of the British Field Sports Society, similarly argued that hunting was part of England’s national heritage.⁶¹ Roughly 10 years later a supporter of the Quorn made the same point: fox hunting was ‘true England’ and carried the ‘bulldog stamp’.⁶²

Surtees, Masfield and Rural England

Over the course of the twentieth century hunting would for some become emblematic not just of pre-war England, but of pre-industrial, rural England. It is this impulse, and not the fracture merely of the War, which produced the appreciative studies of Surtees that appeared in the 1930s. The countryside would become celebrated in twentieth-century sporting literature to a degree not found in earlier work, and this relatively new love would also be read back into the nineteenth-century literature. ‘Surtees’, Darton wrote,

remained all his life a lover of the English countryside: he could no more forget that love than a fox his first lair. He had a wide knowledge of the larger world, and he could outline sharply the people of London or of smaller towns. But inevitably he brings all his creations down to the soil, and makes them belong to it, and rejoice in it as he himself rejoiced. Jorrocks, the Londoner, at his highest pitch of life and humanity, is enjoying England and is part of England. A metropolitan rogue like Sponge is sincere and for the moment honest when he is in full gallop across the brown earth in the spangled English autumn.⁶³

Yet actual descriptions of the countryside are rare in Surtees’ novels. Anthony Steel described Surtees as a landsman with a deep interest in farming as well as hunting, but acknowledges that

watching, and hearing, hounds work is in effect the essence of his sporting life, and comprises practically everything that hunting means to him. It is true he has an eye for country, not only in the hunting sense: he was evidently influenced by natural surroundings, and attempts a rather self-conscious, but not unhappy,

⁵⁹ *Parliamentary Debates*, Commons, 1949, vol. 461, col. 2214.

⁶⁰ Beaufort, *Fox-Hunting* (London, 1980), p. 181.

⁶¹ ‘Hunt opposition “a threat to country life,”’ *The Times*, 12 May 1982.

⁶² ‘Fame and fortune puts Quorn under spotlight’, *The Guardian*, 28 December 1993.

⁶³ Darton, p. 28.

landscape on more than one occasion. Again, when he is not thinking about a formal representation, he is full of pleasant tributes to the countryside.

Such tributes, Steel argued somewhat defensively, ‘except in a master’s hand’, are ‘apt to border on the sentimental’, and since sentimentality was anathema to Surtees, he avoided them.⁶⁴ Watson wrote in a similar vein, ‘To Surtees the English landscape was sacred in a sense which his reticence shrank from turning into currency. It is not easy, for example, to recall any other novelist so sensitive to the sharp fluctuations of English weather ...’ But it was his illustrator, Leech, who gave the seasons ‘magic beauty’.⁶⁵ Stella Walker, writing in the 1970s, stated more bluntly that while Surtees ‘always describes the clothes of his characters with immense care’, he ‘completely ignores the scenery’. She too identifies Leech as the person who ‘could never resist adding also delightful landscapes of the English countryside’.⁶⁶

Steel was able to locate a few descriptive passages, precisely of the type that would appeal to his generation. The village of Handley Cross, to which Jorrocks removes from London, ‘in its infancy’, is almost too good to be true:

the white-washed, thatched roofed cottages formed a straggling square, round a village green, in the centre of which, encircled with time-honoured firs, on a flight of rude stone steps, stood the village cross, the scene of country hirings. Basket-making was the trade of the inhabitants: a healthy and prosperous one, if the looks of its followers and the vine-clad and rose-covered fronts of the cottages might be taken as an index ...

Burton St Leger, while less perfect, still provides a welcome contrast to ‘the long monotonous repetitions of dwellings containing a window, a numbered door, and a peep-hole, peculiar to a mining [settlement]’. Genuine country villages ‘always look healthy and nice, while the latter too often present a combination of mud, tawdry squalor, and unbecoming finery’.⁶⁷ But Walker is correct: the countryside on which Surtees so rarely dwells is the implicit rather than explicit backdrop to his hunting world.

If the post-war generation had to hunt for descriptions of the countryside in Surtees, from Masfield’s time loving descriptions of rural England would become

⁶⁴ Jorrocks’s *England*, p. 4. He did succeed in identifying a few passages – but in *Ask Mama* and *Plain or Ringlets* rather than in the hunting novels.

⁶⁵ Watson, p. 250.

⁶⁶ Stella Walker, *Sporting Art: England 1700–1900* (New York, 1972), p. 179. Walker would later praise the twentieth-century Lionel Edwards for ‘introducing a more subtle approach’ to sporting art, ‘with appreciation of a landscape being as vital to a composition as an eye for horse and hound’. *ODNB*.

⁶⁷ Steel, pp. 117–18.

fundamental to sporting literature. Masfield's whip in *Reynard the Fox*, whose 'chief delight/was hunting fox from noon to night',

... loved the English countryside;
The wine-leaved bramble in the ride,
The lichen on the apple-trees,
The poultry ranging on the leas,
The farms, the moist earth-smelling cover,
His wife's green grave at Mitcheldover,
Where snowdrops pushed at the first thaw.
Under his hide his heart was raw
With joy and pity of these things.

It is hard to imagine Surtees' whips feeling similarly. These sentiments were central to Masfield's own vision, however, and now, as his biographer in the *ODNB* comments, 'perhaps the greatest pleasure the poem offers lies in the observant relish of the natural world'. This statement is interesting on two grounds. First, sustained, conscious 'relish of the natural world' is fairly recent, and second, perhaps more importantly, 'natural' is not the most accurate of adjectives for what Masfield describes in *Reynard*.

Nature versus the Pastoral

'Nature', as Keith Thomas describes in *Man and the Natural World*, was for centuries an adversary, an enemy to be tamed.⁶⁸ Genuine wilderness, now sought out and celebrated, once invoked horror and disgust. Thus in the mid-seventeenth century mountains 'were hated as barren "deformities", "warts", "boils", "monstrous excrescences", "rubbish of the earth", "Nature's *pudenda*" ...'⁶⁹ and as late as 1697 'Ralph Thoresby found both the Border country and the Lake District full of horrors: dreadful fells, hideous wastes, horrid waterfalls, terrible rocks and ghastly precipices'. In the same spirit Dr Johnson wrote of the Scottish Highlands that 'an eye accustomed to flowery pastures and waving harvest is astonished and repelled by this wide extent of hopeless sterility'. Beauty was found in landscapes that had been conquered and cultivated; thus John Morton boasted of Northhamptonshire in 1712 that 'here there are no naked and craggy

⁶⁸ G.M. Trevelyan had commented briefly to the same effect in *English Social History: A Survey of Six Centuries, Chaucer to Queen Victoria* (London, 1943): 'The instinctive craving for the larger features of untamed nature was an inevitable reaction on the part of a society growing over-civilised. In older times forests and thickets were everywhere close at hand, and man was constantly at war with the wilderness ...' (p. 402).

⁶⁹ Keith Thomas, *Man and the Natural World: Changing Attitudes in England 1500–1800* (London, 1984), p. 259.

rocks, no rugged and unsightly mountains, or vast solitary woods to damp and intercept the view.⁷⁰ ‘The ability to derive pleasure from scenes of relative desolation’, as Thomas points out, ‘was more likely to be found among those who by virtue of their social and economic position could contemplate with equanimity the prospect of leaving land uncultivated which might otherwise have produced food. Only when the threat of starvation receded could such an attitude prevail’.⁷¹

A century on, genuinely wild, uncultivated landscapes would become ‘objects of the highest aesthetic admiration’.⁷² They also came to be understood as under threat, ‘nature’ receding as cultivation advanced: ‘Wheresoe’r the traveller turns his steps,/He sees the barren wilderness erased,/Or disappearing’, wrote Wordsworth in 1814.⁷³ These feelings have only intensified, and Wordsworth’s fears have recently found new expression in a variety of ‘nature writing’: Roger Deakin’s *Wildwood* and Robert Macfarlane’s *The Wild Places*, both published in 2007, are prominent and very wonderful examples. But most of Wordsworth’s contemporaries did not care for nature or the wilderness: “‘In the eye of thousands and tens of thousands a rich meadow, with fat cattle grazing upon it, or the sight of what they would call a heavy crop of corn, is worth all ... the Alps and Pyrenees in their utmost grandeur and beauty.’”⁷⁴

It is the ‘tamed and fertile landscape’ over which the fox is hunted and which is celebrated in sporting literature, a rural but domesticated landscape.⁷⁵ The pastoral, not the natural, world predominates in Surtees’ rare descriptions of the countryside, ‘fertile pastures and productive corn fields’.⁷⁶ Masfield’s poetry likewise celebrates not a ‘natural’ landscape but a cultivated, English, pastoral one – but from the early nineteenth century the pastoral as well as the natural world seemed under threat, from urban sprawl and, in the twentieth century, ribbon

⁷⁰ Quoted *ibid.*, p. 258.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, p. 264.

⁷² *Ibid.*, p. 259.

⁷³ Wordsworth, *The Excursion* (1814).

⁷⁴ *Wordsworth’s Guide to the Lakes*, quoted in Thomas, *Man and the Natural World*, p. 257.

⁷⁵ The contrast between wilderness and the pastoral survives in *The Wind in the Willows*, in which Kenneth Grahame contrasts the menacing Wild Wood with the quiet, hedge-lined fields to which the Mole returns with relief: ‘the Mole saw clearly that he was an animal of tilled field and hedgerow, linked to the ploughed furrow, the frequented pasture, the lane of evening lingering, the cultivated garden-plot’ (1908; Dorking, 2007), p. 77.

⁷⁶ Quoted in Steel, p. 120. Similarly: ‘The green streak of fertile soil, how sweet it looks, lit up by the fitful gleam of a cloud-obscured sun the distant sky-touching cairn ... the rough, picturesque, stone bridge ... the sandy road below the watcher’s hill-ensconced hut ... the half-grass, half-heather, of the little moor-edge farm ... whose stone-roofed buildings, washed by a clear mountain stream, and sheltered by a clump of venerable Scotch firs, stand on a bright green patch, a sort of oasis in the desert’. From *Ask Mama*, quoted in Steel, p. 121.

development. Pastoral descriptive as invocation of Englishness predominates in both Masfield and Sassoon's descriptions of the hunt and became a standard feature of the post-Second World War pony literature discussed in Chapter 4.⁷⁷ The novels of Christine Pullein-Thompson are direct descendents of Masfield and Sassoon; the world described in them is that cherished by Darton.

'England is no more what it was'⁷⁸

In the twentieth century those who fought to preserve the sport of fox hunting joined in an older, established tradition of bewailing a rural past: hence Darton's wistful invocations of English soil. This tradition, with its emphasis on the eighteenth-century landscape in particular, can be traced back to William Cobbett's *Rural Rides*.⁷⁹ But an anxiety to preserve a rapidly disappearing rural landscape was particularly marked in the late 1920s and 30s. It was not the sole preserve of fox hunters and is found, for example, in the conservationist campaigns of one of Masfield's equally famous contemporaries, the historian G.M. Trevelyan. Like Masfield (who was a friend of his brother Bob),⁸⁰ Trevelyan was a late Victorian in most of his tastes and sympathies; he was also a 'classic product', as David Cannadine notes, of a 'privileged rural environment'.⁸¹ Dismayed by the effects of motor transport, which was 'turning all England into a suburb',⁸² he argued that 'the modern city, in the unplanned swamp of its increase, lacks form and feature; it is a deadening cage for the human spirit. Urban and suburban life in modern England made no appeal through the eye to the imagination, as had the old village life of our island ...'.⁸³

As the first president of the Youth Hostels Association, established in 1930, Trevelyan encouraged urban young people to reconnect with rural England. He also worked tirelessly on behalf of the National Trust; elected to the Trust's council

⁷⁷ See, e.g., Christine Pullein-Thompson, *Goodbye to Hounds* (1952; London, 1974), pp. 149–50.

⁷⁸ William Cobbett, *Rural Rides* (2 vols, 1830; London, 1912), vol. 2, p. 80.

⁷⁹ Cobbett's view of the past was itself skewed and romantic. Coming out of Winchester Cathedral, his son asked him, "Why, papa, nobody can build such places now, can they?" "No, my dear," said I. "That building was made when there were no poor wretches in England called *paupers*; when there were no *poor-rates*; when every labouring man was clothed in good woollen cloth; and when all had a plenty of meat and bread and beer." *Rural Rides*, vol. 1, p. 29.

⁸⁰ Masfield also worked briefly for J.L. Hammond at the *Speaker* (Babington Smith, p. 83), whose perspective on the Industrial Revolution coloured that of Trevelyan himself. David Cannadine, *G.M. Trevelyan: A Life in History* (London, 1992), p. 152.

⁸¹ Cannadine, p. 144.

⁸² Trevelyan, *English Social History*, p. 575.

⁸³ *Ibid.*, p. 578.

in 1926, he served as chairman of the Estates Committee from 1928 to 1949 and vice-chair of the Executive Committee, 1929–46.⁸⁴ The countryside Trevelyan wished to preserve is, like that described by Masefield, a cultivated one, and man's role in creating it readily acknowledged. In *Must England's Beauty Perish?* (1929) Trevelyan wrote,

A hundred years ago, just before the railway age began, this island was, almost all of it, beautiful, even more beautiful perhaps, than it had been in its wilder state a thousand years farther back in time. For in 1829 our countryside was still the England of Turner and Constable, of Bewick and Wordsworth, of *Lavengro* and Cobbett's *Rides*. It was all good to look at, not least the 'improvements' of the eighteenth century: the thatched and gabled houses, the cornfields, hedges, lanes, stone bridges, new plantations of oak and beech, all harmonized well together, and harmonized also with the wilder parts of the nature in which they were set, the still remaining wrecks of the old English forest, thicket, moorland, and marsh. For man's daily work still supplemented nature's, without those harsh contrasts of line and colour to which we are to-day only too well accustomed. A new barn or a coach-house did not injure the landscape or the village street as an aerodrome or a petrol station is likely to do. To-day the old is almost identified in our thought and speech with the beautiful, and the new with the ugly. But before the age of machinery this was not so. It was only just beginning to be so a hundred years back. In 1829, except for a small area of industrial district of the latest type, the island was all of it beautiful.⁸⁵

Trevelyan persisted in this belief, making the same point repeatedly throughout the now-derided *English Social History* (1943):

It was only in the course of the Eighteenth Century that the beauty of Wordsworth's homeland attained the moment of rightful balance between nature and man. In previous centuries the valleys were "choked, tangled, swampy and featureless"; in our day man is all too successfully regulating the face of nature with the machine. But in the reign of Anne the dales were just beginning to

⁸⁴ Cannadine, pp. 154–5. In his study of Trevelyan Cannadine identified 'the gradual shift in patrician priorities from political activism to cultural stewardship: as aristocrats ceased to be the governing class, they sought to carve out a new role for themselves as the self-appointed guardians of the national heritage ... as a result of the break-up of great estates ... the aristocrats were no longer the exclusive owners of "the land", but became instead the altruistic protectors of "the countryside" on behalf of the community as a whole'. Ibid., p. 159. Deborah, Duchess of Devonshire, makes a similar point in *Wait for Me! Memoirs of the Youngest Mitford Sister* (London, 2010), p. 336. I thank Doug Hay for bringing this to my attention.

⁸⁵ G.M. Trevelyan, *Must England's Beauty Perish?: A Plea on behalf of the National Trust for places of historic interest or natural Beauty* (London, 1929), p. 14.

take on their brief perfection of rural loveliness, ordered but not disciplined, in contrast with the mountain magnificence above and around.⁸⁶

Similarly,

Everywhere that perfectly beautiful equilibrium between man and nature, which marked the Eighteenth Century landscape, was in the course of being established. While hedgerow and orchard were gaining on the wild, the multiplication or improvement of cottages, farm-buildings and Halls was going on ...⁸⁷

That beauty Trevelyan thought under threat and disappearing and England 'above all lands in danger of breeding a race apart from nature'.⁸⁸ A year earlier D.H. Lawrence had written similarly, 'The country is so lovely', while 'the man-made England is so vile'.⁸⁹

'Man-made England' had not always been vile; vileness was identified as a product of the Industrial Revolution. Up to that point, it was argued, and particularly with the agricultural innovations of the eighteenth century, man had done much to 'improve' nature; while acknowledging the mountains' 'magnificence' rather than condemning them as 'excrescences', what Trevelyan longed for was not wilderness but what he believed to be the 'rightful balance' or 'equilibrium' in the relationship between nature and man.⁹⁰ That balance he located in the late eighteenth century, and the landscape he fought to preserve was that praised by Darton as running 'from Surtees to Sassoon'.⁹¹ Trevelyan, although he did not hunt himself, also connected field sports more broadly to an appreciation of the countryside:

There was no luxury about the fieldsports of those days. Hard exercise and spartan habits were the condition of all pursuit of game. This devotion took the leaders of the English world out of doors, and helped inspire the class that

⁸⁶ Trevelyan, *English Social History*, pp. 302–3.

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 304. The point is made again at pp. 400–401. I was startled to find the same view expressed by Jacquetta Hawkes, in *A Land* (1951), a famous, highly personal natural history of the British Isles which takes a long view, starting with geological formations millions of years in the past. In her concluding chapters Hawkes similarly locates perfection of the English landscape in the eighteenth century and describes the Industrial Revolution as a form of barbarian invasion.

⁸⁸ Trevelyan, *Must England's Beauty Perish?*, p. 22.

⁸⁹ *Selected Essays* (1928; Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1950), p. 119, quoted in Thomas, *Man and the Natural World*, p. 250.

⁹⁰ Trevelyan, *English Social History*, p. 302.

⁹¹ Trevelyan did not hunt himself – although he did shoot – but recognised that fox hunting 'caught the imagination of all classes in the countryside'. *English Social History*, p. 406.

then set the mode in everything from poetry to pugilism, with an intimate love and knowledge of woodland, hedgerow and moor, and a strong preference for country over town life which is too seldom found in the leaders of fashion in any age or land.⁹²

Hugh Trevor-Roper – whose first projected magnum opus was to have been ‘A History of the English Ruling Classes’⁹³ – demonstrated similar sensibilities, cherishing both ‘nature’ and a romanticised eighteenth-century past. Like Beckford (and the Pullein-Thompson sisters), he went beagling in his youth.⁹⁴ At university he deliberately cultivated an eighteenth-century persona, ‘with the habits and hearty appetites of a country gentleman from the pre-industrial age’.⁹⁵ These habits, as we have seen, included fox hunting. After graduating, he published on Somerville in *Country Life*.⁹⁶ He loved Surtees, and described his own horse, Rubberneck, in terms reminiscent of the wilful, malicious mounts which figure in that author’s novels.⁹⁷ When Trevor-Roper returned to Christ Church after the Second World War he resumed his pre-industrial persona, hunting again with the Bicester, exercising hounds in Christ Church Meadow, and on one occasion ‘clanking into the Cathedral to read the lesson at Evensong fresh from the chase, wearing a surplice over hunting gear’ like a sporting parson from earlier times.⁹⁸ At a meeting of a club comprised of ex-servicemen and young, unmarried dons he spoke against a motion which resuscitated Oscar Wilde’s dismissal of the sport as ‘the pursuit of the uneatable by the unspeakable’. His opponent, Gilbert Ryle, accused him of suffering from ‘Tallyhosis’.⁹⁹

For Trevor-Roper, like others of his generation, one of the chief attractions of hunting was the proximity it offered to the rural landscape,¹⁰⁰ an appreciation he shared with the non-hunting Trevelyan. The conservative philosopher Roger Scruton, one of fox hunting’s most articulate advocates in the present day, recently celebrated that landscape in remarkably similar terms. Although Scruton’s (working-class) background and (more rigidly conservative) politics differ markedly from those of Trevelyan, who was patrician ‘by birth’ as well as by outlook,¹⁰¹ and a champion of a liberal rather than a conservative aristocracy, their perspectives have something in common. Trevelyan, as David Cannadine

⁹² Trevelyan, *English Social History*, p. 506.

⁹³ Adam Sisman, *Hugh Trevor-Roper: The Biography* (London, 2010), p. 122.

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 21, 28.

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 47. See also the diary entry quoted at pp. 64–5.

⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 60. See ‘William Somerville: The Poet of the Chase’, *Country Life*, 10 June 1939, pp. 614–15.

⁹⁷ Sisman, p. 75.

⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 154.

⁹⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁰ See *ibid.*, pp. 112–13.

¹⁰¹ Cannadine, p. 130.

describes, had shown 'a particularly warm appreciation' of the contributions made by the traditional landed classes to the history of England.¹⁰² 'the eclipse of the aristocracy and the spoilation of the countryside' were his two predominant griefs.¹⁰³ Those same concerns run through Scruton's work. In both *On Hunting* and *News from Somewhere* it is again a pastoral, rather than a truly natural, world which is venerated, what Thomas aptly characterised as a 'tamed, inhabited and productive landscape'.¹⁰⁴

Ironically, the landscape celebrated as traditional by conservatives in the twentieth and early twenty-first centuries had its origins in an impulse for progress and improvement. What is now hailed as the historic countryside is not only relatively recent in origin but the product of radical change. Between 1760 and 1820 2.5 million acres were newly enclosed by acts of Parliament,¹⁰⁵ by 1837 enclosure of open cornfields was almost complete, although enclosure of commons continued to the late 1860s. Roughly 200,000 miles of hedge had been planted over a 100-year period. The enclosure acts were revolutionary, 'hurried', as Trevelyan commented, through 'assemblies not otherwise famous for radical legislation'.¹⁰⁶ And they were doubly contentious, for this 'radicalism of the rich' was railed against by contemporary Tories as well as the rural poor. Roger Scruton, however, rejecting what he sees as a distortion of the past in accordance with socialist principles, describes the process of enclosure as consensual rather than marked by conflict. The new rural boundaries, he asserts, merely divided land for agricultural purposes.¹⁰⁷ As Scruton's view of the process and effects of enclosure is highly idiosyncratic, possibly perverse, and, interestingly, differs markedly from the views expressed by his predecessors in the 'bemoaning of the rural past' tradition, it is worth exploring.

Writing in the 1820s Cobbett, while defending fox hunting, had also regretted the loss of common land and the enclosure process as 'the shutting out of the labourers from all share in the land'.¹⁰⁸ Contemporary attitudes towards, and the effects of, enclosure were subsequently debated over the course of the twentieth century. Some argued that commoners had enjoyed independence and the chance of a modest rise in social status; others saw common right as a 'thin and squalid

¹⁰² Ibid., p. 113.

¹⁰³ Ibid., p. 52. 'Trevelyan's preferred social order remained one in which the countryside dominated the town, and the traditional landowning class dominated the countryside ... he had, by the interwar years, come to regret the break-up of great estates and the decline of the aristocracy, not least because nothing better had replaced them'. Ibid., p. 178.

¹⁰⁴ Thomas, *Man and the Natural World*, p. 255.

¹⁰⁵ Ibid., p. 262.

¹⁰⁶ Trevelyan, *English Social History*, p. 376.

¹⁰⁷ Roger Scruton, *On Hunting* (London, 1998), p. 94.

¹⁰⁸ Cobbett, *Rural Rides*, vol. 2, p. 101 (emphasis in the original).

curtain' hanging between poverty and greater poverty still.¹⁰⁹ J.D. Chambers and G.E. Mingay concluded that such right was 'usually a very limited benefit';¹¹⁰ Jeanette Neeson described enclosure as a 'contentious, politicizing process'.¹¹¹ In Neeson's view parliamentary enclosure caused anger, hostility and a profound sense of loss, of positive 'robbery'; it destroyed rather than promoted community.¹¹²

Trevelyan acknowledged both sides of the argument. Enclosure served to increase the aggregate wealth of the nation as a whole but there was a social price to be paid, and that price 'was a decline in the number of independent cultivators and a rise in the number of landless labourers'.¹¹³ He did not comment overtly on the contribution of enclosure to the alienation of the Englishman from the land, but George Sturt (1863–1927) had explicitly addressed this issue in *Change in the Village* (1912).¹¹⁴ Sturt, like Cobbett a Farnham man, blamed the loss of connection with the countryside almost exclusively on the enclosure of the commons:

All the things of the countryside [once] had an intimate bearing upon [the peasant's] own fate; he was not there to admire them, but to live by them – or, say, to wrest his living from them by familiar knowledge of their properties. From long experience – experience older than his own, and traditional amongst his people – he knew the soil of the fields and its variations almost foot by foot; he understood the springs and streams; hedgerow and ditch explained themselves to him; the coppices and woods, the water-meadows and the windy heaths, the local chalk and clay and stone, all had a place in his regard – reminded him of the crafts of his people, spoke to him of the economies of his own cottage life; so that the turfs or the faggots or the timber he handled when at home called

¹⁰⁹ Compare John and Barbara Hammond, *The Village Labourer, 1760–1832: A Study in the Government of England before the Reform Bill* (London, 1911); C.S. and C.S. Orwin, *The Open Fields* (Oxford, 1938) with J. D. Chambers, 'Enclosure and Labour Supply in the Industrial Revolution', in E.L. Jones (ed.), *Agriculture and Economic Growth in England 1650–1815* (London, 1967), quotation at p. 117. For an overview of writing on enclosure see J.M. Neeson, *Commoners: Common right, Enclosure and Social Change in England, 1700–1820* (Cambridge, 1993), pp. 6–7; G.E. Mingay, *Parliamentary Enclosure in England: An Introduction to its Causes, Incidence and Impact 1750–1850* (London, 1997), pp. 2–3.

¹¹⁰ *The Agricultural Revolution, 1750–1880* (London, 1966), p. 98.

¹¹¹ Neeson, p. 188.

¹¹² *Ibid.*, p. 291 (emphasis in the original). Neeson acknowledges that opinion among the commoners was divided, with the hostile most commonly found in landless labourers or owner occupiers of no more than 40 acres. *Ibid.*, p. 293. Mingay emphasises the importance of considering the different effects of enclosure on the various components of rural society: 'large landowners, large farmers and owner-occupiers, small tenant farmers, and very small occupiers and cottagers'. *Parliamentary Enclosure*, p. 3.

¹¹³ Trevelyan, *English Social History*, p. 379.

¹¹⁴ This book was published under the pseudonym of George Bourne. For Sturt see the *ODNB*.

his fancy, while he was handling them, to the landscape they came from ... One may ... imagine dimly what the cumulative effect of it must have been on the peasant's outlook; how attached he must have grown – I mean how closely linked – to his own countryside. He did not merely 'reside' in it; he was part of it, and it was part of him. He fitted into it as one of its native denizens, like the hedgehogs and the thrushes ...¹¹⁵

And then came enclosure: 'The direct light has gone out of the people's life – the light, the meaning, the guidance. They no longer have a civilization, but only some derelict habits left from that which has gone'.¹¹⁶ The landscape is no longer 'peopled by a comfortable folk, whose dear and intimate love of it gave a human interest to every feature of its beauty ... those who live there have in fact lost touch with its venerable meanings ...'.¹¹⁷

Neeson paints a similar picture of the pre-enclosed landscape:

The description of common fields as *open* fields is entirely appropriate. Distances are shorter when fields are in strips. You can call from one to the next. You can plough them and talk across the backs of horses at the same time. You can see at a glance whose bit of hedges or mounds needs fixing, what part of the common ditch is choked with weeds. Standing at the centre of the village feels like standing at the hub of the whole system: the fields spread out around you, the decision to sow one with wheat, another with barley is written on the landscape. For all that individual men and women work their own bits of land, their economy is public and to a large degree still shared.¹¹⁸

'Enclosure – rightly named – meant the closing of the countryside', Neeson argues, quoting the nineteenth-century naturalist and poet John Clare, who described the process as the work of tyrannical philistines.¹¹⁹

Trevelyan, Sturt and Scruton: all seek a 'human' landscape, a landscape, that is, in which man is integrated within the natural world,¹²⁰ although Scruton's

¹¹⁵ [George Bourne], *Change in the Village* (London, 1912), pp. 120–22.

¹¹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 126.

¹¹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 308.

¹¹⁸ Neeson, p. 2.

¹¹⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 5–6.

¹²⁰ Even Robert Macfarlane is disturbed by a wilderness completely divorced from and indifferent to humankind. Witness his description of Ben Hope: 'This was a terrain that had been thrown up by fire and survived ice. There was nothing, save the wall of rocks I had made and the summit cairn, to suggest history. Nothing human ... this place was not hostile to my presence, far from it. Just entirely, gradelessly indifferent. Up there, I felt no companionship with the land ... there was no question of relation. This place refused any imputation of meaning'. He could not wait to leave. *The Wild Places* (London, 2007), p. 157. The landscapes we cherish tend to incorporate some degree of a human past.

identification of the origins of such a landscape differs markedly. Sturt may be in danger, however, of attributing post-industrial feeling and views to the pre-industrial population. ‘At times’, he wrote, ‘I can vaguely feel what the peasant’s attitude must have been’. Trevelyan was more perceptive in this regard: ‘We cannot’, he wrote, ‘put ourselves back into the minds of our ancestors, and if we could we should still be puzzled ...’¹²¹ In appropriating the past, the nostalgic impulse inevitably distorts it. But it is nonetheless true and worth remembering that the creation of the enclosed landscape which enabled the modern form of hunting and which is now cherished as ‘traditional’ was, in its own time, modern, controversial and socially divisive.

Interestingly, while the planting of hedges provoked a sense of loss in at least some portions of the population, their uprooting centuries later has proved equally controversial. The first loss was social, the loss of an older form of human community, the second is rooted in more recent concerns for the environment. In the intensely farmed landscape of twenty-first-century England hedges originally planted for agricultural purposes now serve as shelter and refuge for threatened wildlife. Man-planted hedges, under siege from the 1970s, have become associated with the wilderness, collapsing to an extent the categories of ‘natural’ and ‘pastoral’. And the fox-hunting community now offers conservation and biodiversity in defence of their sport.

Spiritual Health

Regardless of whether or not the pre-industrial Englishman would have recognised his life from the descriptions provided by Trevelyan or Scruton, those descriptions are an indicator of twentieth-century anxieties about the fate of the English countryside, and the implications of that fate for the moral and spiritual health of the nation. For Trevelyan, the ‘crude levelling machinery of modern life’¹²² was destroying not merely the physical countryside but England’s very soul:

The happiness and the soul’s health of the whole people are at stake. The preservation of natural beauty as an element of our nation’s life is a cause that deeply concerns people of every sort who are working to maintain any ideal standards and any healthy life ... if natural beauty disappears, religion, education, national tradition, social reform, literature and art, will all be deprived of a principal source of life and vigour that in our island has helped them immeasurably in the past and is helping them still. Without vision the

¹²¹ Trevelyan, *English Social History*, pp. 273–4. Trevelyan’s own writing, however, is at times embarrassingly nostalgic. In the pre-industrial world, ‘Most people remained all their lives under the influence of Pan and his magic’. ‘The beauty of field and wood and hedge, the immemorial customs of rural life’, he argued, had ‘supplied a humane background and an age-long tradition to temper poverty’ (p. 475).

¹²² Trevelyan, *Must England’s Beauty Perish?*, p. 17.

people perish, and without natural beauty the English people will perish in the spiritual sense.¹²³

Trevelyan was not alone in these beliefs. The sentiment is evident in Darton's assertion that a 'metropolitan rogue' like Soapey Sponge became sincere and honest – albeit temporarily – when galloping across the English countryside. For 'many members' of Trevelyan's generation, David Cannadine notes, the countryside 'was the repository of national identity, "spiritual values", and liberty and freedom'. It had to be preserved 'at all costs' from the spread of bungalows, the motor car, and ribbon development'.¹²⁴ Resistance to the advent of a suburban world dominated by the car rather than the horse is a predominant feature of the earliest of the 'pony books', which were roughly contemporaneous with Trevelyan's pamphleteering on behalf of the National Trust. 'Modern man', Trevelyan argued, must 'be kept in touch with nature, as an offset to his imprisonment in the unnatural sights and sounds of city life'.¹²⁵ 'Golden Gorse' – Wace's pseudonym alone identifies her sympathies – wrote in similar terms of 'the revolt from machinery and the wish to get back to Nature'.¹²⁶ Marjorie Mary Oliver and Eva Ducat's *The Ponies of Bunts* (1933) likewise contrasted unhealthy city life with life in the country. Two young urban children who have lived a life 'with no riding, no animals ... condemned to a daily walk in Kensington Gardens' arrive for a country visit pale and peaky, with no appetites to speak of. Fresh air and an outdoor life with ponies and other animals soon turns them ravenous. When their mother comes to visit she finds them brown and bursting with energy, while their father, surveying 'the horses and ponies in the beautiful open meadow with the crowd of country men and women standing round them so simply ... felt that this was a proper way for English boys and girls to spend their time out of doors'. 'Nature', riding and hunting are presented as an antidote to the corruption of city life, promoting particular moral values as well as physical health. The children's experience of the countryside will enable them to 'grow up decent men and women'.¹²⁷

The Horse

As the motor car replaced it as a mode of transit, the horse acquired a nostalgic appeal of its own. This appeal is conspicuous by its absence in the novels of Surtees, in which horses tend to be described as cunning adversaries, and it is

¹²³ Ibid., p. 19.

¹²⁴ ODNB.

¹²⁵ Trevelyan, *Must England's Beauty Perish?*, p. 21.

¹²⁶ *The Young Rider* (London, 1928), p. vi. The reference to 'Nature' is again misleading; the longed-for nirvana is not 'nature' but the rural rather than urban world.

¹²⁷ Marjorie Mary Oliver and Eva Ducat, *The Ponies of Bunts and the Adventures of the Children Who Rode Them* (London, 1933), pp. 2, 82.

not overly evident in *Reynard*. Cars, after all, were uncommon in 1919. Yet the motor car had been identified as the enemy in *The Wind in the Willows* (1908) and this animosity is also found in Forster's *Howards End*, begun in the same year: “the throbbing, stinking car” ... stands ... as the supreme symbol of the detested “new civilization”.”¹²⁸ ‘Science’, Forster wrote in his diary, was ‘enslaving’ man to machines: ‘The little houses that I am used to will be swept away, the fields will stink of petrol, and the air ships will shatter the stars. Man may get a new and perhaps a greater soul for the new conditions. But such a soul as mine will be crushed out’.¹²⁹ In London,

month by month the roads smelt more strongly of petrol, and were more difficult to cross, and human beings heard each other speak with greater difficulty, breathed less of the air, and saw less of the sky. Nature withdrew: the leaves were falling by midsummer; the sun shone through dirt with an admired obscurity.¹³⁰

Like Cobbett almost a century before him, Forster feared the consequences of increased mobility, the development of a ‘nomadic civilization’ which was ‘altering human nature so profoundly’ and placing ‘upon personal relations a stress greater than they have ever borne before. Under cosmopolitanism, if it comes, we shall receive no help from the earth. Trees and meadows and mountains will only be a spectacle, and the binding force that they once exercised on character must be entrusted to Love alone. May Love be equal to the task!’¹³¹

The pony stories of the 1920s and 30s are infused with the same sentiment, but as well as condemning the advent of the car they mourned the eclipse of the horse. In the Epilogue to *The Young Rider* ‘Golden Gorse’ lamented the triumph of the motorised vehicles:

The saddest result of the motor is the banishment of the horse from the common life of the people. This is not merely the substitution of one mode of conveyance for another – it is the sacrifice of the spiritual to the material ... Surely the motor has come as man’s punishment for his ill-treatment of the horse, his age-long friend. In that companionship man learns many things – gentleness and patience come to him, insight and sympathy, courage and endurance. He learns to be firm yet kind – to temper justice with mercy. Dealing with God’s noblest creature he

¹²⁸ Oliver Stallybrass, ‘Editor’s Introduction’, E.M. Forster, *Howards End* (1910; London, 1983), p. 10.

¹²⁹ 27 January 1908. Quoted *ibid*.

¹³⁰ Forster, *Howards End*, p. 115.

¹³¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 256–7. Cobbett wrote, ‘the facilities which now exist of moving human bodies from place to place are amongst the curses of the country, the destroyers of industry, of morals, and, of course, of happiness’. *Rural Rides*, vol. 2, p. 31 (emphasis in the original).

learns the things of God – and at the end, by the grace of God, perhaps his horse will bring him to that heaven for which ‘all horses are fit, but few men’.¹³²

She set her *Moorland Mousie* (1929) in the transition period when horse-drawn vehicles shared the road with new motors. It was an uneasy coexistence, horses finding the tarred roads slippery and terrified by ‘the terrible traffic with its inconsiderate or ignorant drivers’.¹³³ *The Ponies of Bunts* similarly champions the horse over the car (‘bestly things’): Miss Fairfax uses a trap and ponies and ‘won’t have a proper drive made because she is afraid people would come to see her in motors if she did’.¹³⁴ *Silver Snaffles* contrasts at greater length a benign horsey world with mechanised modernity: bordering the ponies’ paradise is a modern hell, ‘The Land of the People who had No Horse Sense’, a land permeated by the smell of oil and petrol and gritty dust, on whose broad, slippery roads ‘roared and raced streams of cars and motor cycles, hooting on their horns or back-firing with loud, banging noises like guns going off’.¹³⁵ But it is Rudyard Kipling who perhaps offers the most succinct description of a painful transition. His ‘Fox Hunting’ (1933), ends:

When men grew shy of hunting stag,
For fear the Law might try ’em,
The Car put up an average bag
Of twenty dead *per diem*.
Then every road was made a rink
For coroners to sit on;
And so began, in skid and stink,
The real blood-sport of Britain!

‘What does fox-hunting mean to you?’

With increasing concern over the vanishing pastoral world, both the countryside and the horse acquired a new prominence in the twentieth century among those who hunted, in hunting literature and in studies of that literature. Beckford’s passion in the late eighteenth century, and that of Surtees in the middle decade of the nineteenth, was for hounds and hound work, not riding or the view. Masfield acknowledges in his own period the continued ‘delight in *hunting*, in the working of hounds, by themselves or with the huntsman, to find and kill their fox. Though

¹³² [Wace], *The Young Rider*, p. 165.

¹³³ [Muriel Wace], *Moorland Mousie* (London, 1929), p. 99.

¹³⁴ Oliver and Ducat, pp. 5, 10.

¹³⁵ Primrose Cumming, *Silver Snaffles* (1937; Edinburgh, 2007), p. 81.

many men and women hunt in order to ride, many still ride in order to hunt'.¹³⁶ Others, however, began to privilege different concerns in discussing their sport. When, in 1939, David Brock MFH began his *Fox-hunter's Week-end Book* by musing on 'What does fox-hunting mean to *you*?', he described 'a shrine built of stones' – and in this shrine 'The Countryside' preceded 'the Foxhound'.

It was Richard Jeffries who wrote: 'Those only know a country who are acquainted with its foot-paths. By the roads, indeed, the outside may be seen; but the foot-paths go through the heart of the land. So you may pass from village to village; now crossing green meads, now corn-fields, over brooks, past woods, through farm-yard and rick-barken'. And fox-hunting, being a tolerated form of trespass, takes you still deeper into the true country, still farther from the artificiality of the town of which even the foot-path (trodden no doubt by urban feet on Sunday afternoons and bank-holidays) is an out-post.

Fox-hunting shows me the countryside. It shows me the dawn gently unwrapping the mist-enshrouded corn-stooks on Ramshorn Down; it shows me the flash of the kingfisher between the gorse-covered banks of the Clodiagh, and 'Paddy the Bobber' poaching salmon on the lovely Suir; it shows me the hop-pickers at work at Suckley and the old-year lambs at Jevington; it shows me the stone tramway along which London Bridge once was carried across the heart of Dartmoor, and the ten plough teams at work near Tawsmead; it shows me the wild white cattle of Chillingham, and the sweet-breathed, unruffled, dairy cows of the Dauntsey Vale. Always it shows me the country, the country ways and the country men. And those are all, to me, as vital parts of fox-hunting as the fox, the hound, or the horse'.¹³⁷

Pages 40 through 54 of Brock's book are devoted to drawings of cut and laid versus stake and bound hedges; species of trees; and various breeds of swine, cattle, sheep and horses. While Beckford is still cited, Brock's understanding and love of fox hunting is in many ways fundamentally different. And his type of appreciation had become the norm by the end of the twentieth century. Michael Clayton, one of the most prolific propagandists of the sport in the present day, argues like John Cook almost two centuries earlier that fox hunting and other field sports influenced the formation of national character.¹³⁸ Yet he also insists that the love of hunting is bound up with love of the English countryside.¹³⁹

¹³⁶ 'Introduction', *Reynard the Fox*, 2nd American ed., 1920; repr. in Errington (ed.), *Masefield, Reynard the Fox*, p. 74 (emphasis added).

¹³⁷ David William Errington Brock, *The Fox-hunter's Week-end Book* (London, 1939), pp. 20–21.

¹³⁸ Michael Clayton, *Foxhunting in Paradise* (London, 1993), p. 205.

¹³⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 1.

Roger Scruton

The nostalgic appeal of hunting does not lie solely in its rural associations: two of fox hunting's chief supporters play up the association not merely with the countryside but with the social values of a previous age. It is the aristocratic connection, and fox hunting's traditional, deferential values, that Roger Scruton chooses to celebrate. Where by his own account Scruton's father had a deep-seated hatred of the ruling class, the son champions an anachronistic aristocratic idea.¹⁴⁰ Scruton's conservative grumbling is much in the tradition of William Cobbett, who rode through England in the 1820s raging against 'improvement' and 'progress', and lamenting the disappearance of paternal social relations. Echoes can also be found of Darton's discontents. 'To-day', wrote Darton in 1931,

stout conservatives might argue we have too many phenomena, too few guides to perspective. What *is* English? The prevalence of pink-legs on pillions? The noisiest speed records? The largest guaranteed newspaper circulation, the book with more obscene words on a page than any other, the record crowd to watch hired athletes, the two-eyed stance, the most daring disrobing in public? The disregard of public worship, the marriage tie and family life?

A great many people would express hatred of one or other of these things and many more and would be quite sincere in saying ... that England is going to the dogs. So it always is. But it never yet has caught them up and ridden over them like a bad thruster.¹⁴¹

Scruton's advocacy of fox hunting is part and parcel of his hatred for and rejection of modern society and love of 'vanished things', a world which no longer exists.¹⁴² He is not unique in this regard. Even in the so-called golden age of the nineteenth century, Itzkowitz commented, 'foxhunting was a grand survival of an earlier age. The sport had originated in a traditional, pre-industrial, rural society ... [and] it ... mirrored and celebrated the values of that earlier society'.¹⁴³ This appears precisely the attraction for Scruton. He celebrates not just the vanishing pastoral world but pre-industrial social relations, delighting in the fact that in hunting diction "'master" and "servant" have retained their traditional use' and rejoicing in ritual courtliness and formal costume.¹⁴⁴ *On Hunting* and *News from Somewhere* are shot through with a longing for an ordered world, for community

¹⁴⁰ Scruton, *On Hunting*, p. 13.

¹⁴¹ Darton, pp. 192–3.

¹⁴² Scruton, *On Hunting*, p. 25.

¹⁴³ David C. Itzkowitz, *Peculiar Privilege: A Social History of Foxhunting, 1753–1885* (Hassocks, Sussex, 1977), p. 178.

¹⁴⁴ Scruton, *On Hunting*, p. 38. Scruton's own first hunting gear came secondhand from Enoch Powell (p. 56). On hunt dress and etiquette see also *News from Somewhere: On Settling* (London, 2004), pp. 43–4.

and social membership, for a rural England of benevolent squires and contented labourers. England, Jeremy Paxman wrote in his study of the English, ‘is not the country in which the English actually live, but the place they *imagine* they are living in ... the English have become exiles from their own country’.¹⁴⁵ Paxman and Scruton both write of a countryside and a country life that have become hollow shells – but where Paxman urges the need for an articulation of Englishness which encompasses urban dwellers,¹⁴⁶ Scruton beats a retreat. His is a politics of nostalgia – just as Cobbett’s was in the nineteenth century.

Rory Knight Bruce

Nostalgia for a vanished – and highly idealised – social as well as natural world is even more evident in Rory Knight Bruce’s *Red Letter Days* (2008). Although he began his career as an urban journalist, Knight Bruce falls squarely within the sports writing tradition: as a hunting correspondent for *Horse and Hound* and columnist for *The Field* he can be seen as a literary descendent of nineteenth-century sporting journalists Nimrod and Surtees. In the introduction to his account of hunting across the British Isles, however, he places himself firmly within another tradition: that of a previous generation of memoir writers, products of Empire who had had military or colonial experience and as a consequence had come to value both peace and the natural world.¹⁴⁷ Knight Bruce appears uninterested in hunting’s aristocratic associations and is less appreciative than Scruton of the traditional master and servant terminology, arguing that ‘hunt staff’ is rightly preferred by many hunts in recognition of social and sporting change.¹⁴⁸ Yet his book consistently invokes lost worlds and the values of a different age.¹⁴⁹ In *Red Letter Days* hunting seems not so much tradition as fiercely embraced anachronism. The wartime experiences of his father, the master and huntsman of a pack of Devon foxhounds, made a lasting impression on a child born in 1955, and hunting, as an acquaintance told him, was his version of war. In Knight Bruce there is a distinct whiff of envy as well as respect for his father’s generation;¹⁵⁰ like Sassoon’s Colonel¹⁵¹ he himself has not seen military service. Arguably, he hunts because he has not had the opportunity to fight.

¹⁴⁵ Jeremy Paxman, *The English: A Portrait of a People* (1998; New York, 2000), p. 144.

¹⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 172–3.

¹⁴⁷ Rory Knight Bruce, *Red Letter Days: Hunting Across the British Isles* (Wykey, Shrewsbury, 2008), p. 9.

¹⁴⁸ Knight Bruce, ‘Mad, bad and dangerous – Piscose sermon on The Mound’, *The Field* (November 2006): p. 11.

¹⁴⁹ See, e.g., Knight Bruce, *Red Letter Days*, p. 168.

¹⁵⁰ The same point is made in the chapter about bullfighting, which Knight Bruce acknowledges as providing him with the closest proximity to wars in which he hadn’t fought (p. 122).

¹⁵¹ Siegfried Sassoon, *Memoirs of a Fox-Hunting Man* (1928; London, 1975), p. 142.

Hunting is also ritual bordering on religion, as Knight Bruce's title implies: red letter days were saint's days in the ecclesiastical calendar. He is not the first to make the connection. In Masfield's Chaucerian *Reynard the Fox* hunting is substituted for religious pilgrimage. Masfield's invocation is spiritual rather than ritualistic. 'Hunting makes people happy more than anything I know. When people are happy together, I am quite certain that they build up something eternal, something both beautiful and divine, which weakens the power of all evil things upon this life of men and women'.¹⁵² Watching spectators at a hunt in 1923 he wrote, 'All these were kindled and cheered by the beauty and glory of the horses, the colour, life and manhood of the sport, and the sympathy that linked that world to friendship and fellowship. Religion moved thus once, so did poetry'.¹⁵³ Others have made the parallel purely in terms of ritual. Darton, for example, described Sassoon as having lived as a boy 'in the atmosphere of the hunt ritual. Every well-bred country child, even in the 'nineties, had to learn the ordained services, and the rubrics too ... All that liturgy, to the average son of the squirearchy, was as inevitable as the Church Catechism and quite as unquestioned; perhaps, also, not less artificial. It can be learned more pleasantly'.¹⁵⁴

On the death of a fox well caught by hounds, Knight Bruce writes, he removes his cap and prays silently. That death briefly saddens him rather than being a cause for celebration.¹⁵⁵ Why, then, hunt? These were certainly not Beckford's sentiments, or those of Surtees. The appeal as articulated in Knight Bruce's account is highly emotive. Hunting is connected not merely with religion but with tradition more broadly, it is a sport of fathers and grandfathers, and linked with 'Monarch and Country'. One of the hunting books given to him by his own father was a biography of Pytchley huntsman Frank Freeman, with whom the queen had ridden, as Princess Elizabeth, on her first day's hunting in April, 1931.¹⁵⁶ She was brought on a leading rein by her parents. On the next page he describes the emotional impact of remembering, when going out with the Pytchley himself on the day before the legal ban came into effect, that that was where the queen had first hunted.¹⁵⁷

¹⁵² 'Introduction', *Reynard the Fox*, 2nd American ed., 1920; repr. in Errington (ed.), Masfield, *Reynard the Fox*, p. 81.

¹⁵³ 'Fox-hunting', *The Windmill*, p. 92, repr. in Errington (ed.), Masfield, *Reynard the Fox*, p. 83.

¹⁵⁴ Darton, pp. 53–4.

¹⁵⁵ Knight Bruce, *Red Letter Days*, pp. 80, 41.

¹⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 93.

¹⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 94. Knight Bruce appears to exemplify the type of fox hunter who so irked Venetia Newell in the 1980s: 'The attitudes of hunt-supporters appear to be compounded of a love of violence, which finds fulfilment in the chase, and sentimentality, often a related emotion, bolstered by strident nationalism ... and a certain remoteness from reality, especially in relation to war'. 'The Unspeakable in Pursuit of the Uneatable: Some Comments on Fox-Hunting', *Folklore*, 94/1 (1983): pp. 86–90 at p. 89.

Otis Ferry

A similarly romantic view of hunting, and of the eighteenth century, is espoused by Otis Ferry. Ferry was introduced to hunting at the age of 15 by Knight Bruce who, unsurprisingly, defended the Commons invasion: Otis and his friends, he said, had demonstrated ‘a sense that the history and values of hunting and the countryside were being trampled on. It was as if those who had died in the wars for the freedoms of liberty were being disinterred by arrogance and wholly misplaced class hatred’.¹⁵⁸ While the liberty argument may be partially correct Ferry’s passionate commitment to hunting also appears to be rooted in a rejection of modernity, coloured by naturalist impulses and a preference for a pre-industrial landscape. Hunting, he said, ‘channelled my love of nature and adrenaline’.

When I first came here [Shropshire] it was incredibly wild. The hills, vales and moorland come upon you from nowhere. One moment you could be galloping over flat arable farmland and by the end of a hunt you could be on a bleak snow-covered hillside with tufts of heather and with ravens and buzzards patrolling the skies. I have always taken an interest in birds, from the age of 11 when I had a pet jackdaw, and in Shropshire there is a huge variety, from snipe, skylarks and curlew, to kites, gyr and peregrine falcons. The hills even boast a small population of grouse. Ravens have always been my favourites and many a time I have nearly ridden into a bog as my attention has been fixed on the aerobatics of courting ravens, flipping on their backs and flying upside down.¹⁵⁹

Ferry prefers an ‘old-fashioned’ countryside and told the *Telegraph* he would ‘rather live in the eighteenth century. “That’s my fantasy, when there were no motorways, no housing estates or intensive farming – just acres of land to gallop over. It would have been an incredible time to be alive.”’¹⁶⁰ It isn’t just the taming and paving over of nature he deplores, but the steady barrage of instruction and admonition that now accompanies it, his love of hunting rooted partly in a contempt for a ‘safety first’, anti-risk, nanny state society:

In the summer I exercise the hounds through the lanes around the kennels before the sun overheats the road. You might see one car during morning exercise. The hounds can run on without fear of being hit.

However in the last month huge double-width notice boards have been erected at several lane ends. They state the name of the road, where it goes, the

¹⁵⁸ Knight Bruce, *Red Letter Days*, pp. 134, 135. Tipped off by Otis’s mother Lucy, Knight Bruce had delivered an eight-page version of the event for the *Daily Mail* and then collected Otis for a day’s hunting in Shropshire.

¹⁵⁹ ‘Counties of Britain: Shropshire’, *The Telegraph*, 20 March 2006.

¹⁶⁰ ‘I’d be happy to die for my cause’, *The Telegraph*, 25 September 2004. See also ‘The family that protests together ...’ *The Telegraph*, 15 May 2006.

area, a speed limit of 20 mph and in bold lettering the words 'quiet lane'. They may even have Braille on them – I haven't checked. I believe people want to come here because it is wild.

They leave their houses and offices for a break from being bossed around. They pull on wellies to get dirty and experience somewhere that has not been tamed. And yet the first thing they see is a council sign telling them their grid reference. They are told to Slow Down and Be Quiet. How can they unwind? Why must they be mollycoddled here as they are in the rest of England?¹⁶¹

Other twenty-first-century advocates similarly contrast the excitement of the hunt with the drab virtual world of the majority. 'Our new ruling establishment is committed to a suburban monoculture', despaired Max Hastings. 'Soon, the only survivals of a batty yet wonderfully colourful heritage will be pubs named the Fox and Hounds'.¹⁶² Melissa Kite argued that the appeal of hunting lay in the fact that 'it brings us close to the natural order of things, allows us to experience nature in the raw, not through the car window. It is the honesty of hunting that attracts ... and which is in stark contrast to the chocolate-box lie ...'¹⁶³ This sentiment too has eighteenth-century roots, in that the twenty-first-century taste for fox hunting can be seen as paralleling the eighteenth-century enthusiasm for mountain climbing: as ordinary life became safer and more comfortable, 'occasional bouts of hardship' and danger developed an attraction of their own.¹⁶⁴ In the nineteenth century Delmé Radcliffe claimed that such pursuits were essential to the 'internal welfare' and continued well-being of the country. Contemplating the possibility that fox hunting might some day come to an end he wrote,

we cannot but shudder at the view of any measures calculated to drain to the source the very springs of its existence, to dry up the fountains by which it is supported, to change our habits and pursuits, transform the rural soil into one vast gridiron, and render us literally, what Napoleon termed us, a 'mere nation of shopkeepers'.¹⁶⁵

¹⁶¹ 'Counties of Britain'. The naturalist writer Roger Deakin similarly bemoaned the current blighting of the landscape by signposting or marking with interpretation boards (or 'the Heritage Industry getting its dead hand on a wild place and taming it to death'). *Notes from Walnut Tree Farm* (London, 2008), p. 142; see also p. 121.

¹⁶² 'Foxhunting gave English culture its leap and its dash', *The Telegraph*, 18 September 2004. Hastings continued more provocatively, 'Perhaps Mr Tony Banks and his friends will feel more comfortable when these, too, are suppressed, replaced by some ideal New Labour niterie christened The Halal Butcher'.

¹⁶³ 'The hunt ban is all about class – so bring out Kevin and Vinny', *The Telegraph*, 26 September 2004.

¹⁶⁴ Thomas, *Man and the Natural World*, p. 261.

¹⁶⁵ Frederick Peter Delmé Radcliffe, *The Noble Science: A Few General Ideas on Fox-Hunting, for the Use of the Rising Generation of Sportsmen*, 3rd ed. (London, 1875),

Conclusion

Fox hunting, Darton had mused in the early 1930s, should not have survived the First World War – and yet it did. The sport's survival past the Great War and the Second World War into the twenty-first century in many ways can be explained by the very fact that it is *not* modern. Its lack of modernity indeed may partially explain the appeal of hunting even in Surtees' time: fox hunting became England's 'national' sport, after all, in an industrialising world. In the early nineteenth century Cobbett had raged against the 'new artificial society with no roots in the soil'. Surtees chose to ignore that new world, and by the twentieth century the sport became cherished as a relic of the true 'England', rural and colourful, an antidote to drab, urban modernity. In the early twenty-first century the negative reaction to modernity has taken a variety of forms: it is evident in the nature writing of Roger Deakin and Robert Macfarlane,¹⁶⁶ but also in the work of Roger Scruton and Rory Knight Bruce. All four romanticise the past, English landscapes and the Englishman's relationship to that landscape, just as their early twentieth-century predecessors G.M. Trevelyan and George Sturt did. This taste for the country depends upon urbanisation: 'men did not pine for the countryside so long as they lived on terms of daily familiarity with it'.¹⁶⁷ It can be found from the seventeenth century, but Keith Thomas dates 'a genuine tension between the relentless progress of urbanisation and the rural longing to which an increasing number of people were subject' to the eighteenth.¹⁶⁸ That tension increased and became

p. 123.

¹⁶⁶ Deakin and Macfarlane's use of 'wild' might arguably be queried or problematised. Deakin in particular, it seems to me, was really writing about a pre-industrial relationship of man and nature rather than nature per se – perhaps man *in* nature would be better. In *Wildwood* Deakin spoke of planting woods and coppicing them, planting trees and pleaching them; he championed ancient orchards, preserved hedges, built with wood and worked with it. He might be described as a sort of human 'Ent', the tree shepherds of Tolkien's imagination who lovingly tended the forests of Middle Earth, and has clear affinities with the nineteenth-century poet John Clare (see, e.g., *The Selected Poems and Prose of John Clare*, ed. Eric Robinson and Geoffrey Summerfield [London, 1967], p. 162). And while Macfarlane might crave remote locations 'where the evidence of human presence was minimal or absent' (*The Wild Places*, p. 8), many of his 'wild places' – Ynes Enlli, the Pennine moors, the Scottish glens – are actually the product of, or haunted by, intersections of man and nature in the past. It is probably no accident that the most telling examples in this regard occur in the section of the book in which he explores, with Deakin, the ancient sunken and overgrown drove roads known as 'holloways' and then moves on to discuss hedges. In the twenty-first century these manmade features offer shelter or sanctuary for the retreating wild, but holloways and hedges did not occur naturally: they were imprinted on the landscape by man.

¹⁶⁷ Thomas, *Man and the Natural World*, p. 250, citing Hugh Blair, *Lectures on Rhetoric and Belles Lettres*, 8th ed., 1801.

¹⁶⁸ Thomas, *Man and the Natural World*, p. 253.

more marked in the nineteenth century with the steady progress of the twin forces of industrialisation and urbanisation: looming over the English countryside in Cobbett's *Rural Rides* is the great 'Wen' of London. By the twentieth century the 'traditional' – that is, the eighteenth century – countryside was widely recognised as under threat. Nostalgia for a romanticised pre-industrial world characterises English history and literature in this period. The desired, as expressed in the poetry of Masfield and the history of Trevelyan, was harmony between man and nature.

Nostalgia for a lost, pastoral world has served from the early twentieth century to fuel the continued support for fox hunting. The ideal harmony between man and nature was expressly identified by Trevelyan as achieving its apotheosis in the eighteenth century, when agricultural innovation had made widespread famine a thing of the past but the landscape had not yet been scarred by railways, motorways, overpopulation and barbed wire. It is that world which twenty-first century hunt supporters like Otis Ferry continue to hunger for. Ferry's sense of history may be wanting: his eighteenth-century forbears were after all working in mines beneath the ground rather than galloping over it. He may, like Cobbett, Sturt and Trevelyan before him, be guilty of seeing the past through rose-coloured spectacles, of reading his own desires backwards and inventing a time which has never existed. But Ferry, living in and alienated from an England that seems in danger of becoming a series of supermarket car parks serviced by airports, *envies* the eighteenth-century Englishman and not, it seems to me, for reasons to do with 'society' or social climbing.¹⁶⁹ Hunting has become bound up in a broader nostalgia for a relationship with the countryside, and a particular countryside at that: one that is characterised – or 'humanised' – by the agricultural improvements, including enclosure, which created the ideal fox-hunting landscape. For some, this nostalgia extends to a social order of hierarchy and deference. For others, the escape is to a pre-nanny state world in which physical risk was accepted, even sought out, rather than constantly warned against. Perhaps John Masfield deserves the final word, taken not from *Reynard* but his 1935 children's novel *The Box of Delights*. When Kay Harker finally tracks down Arnold of Todi, maker of the magical box entrusted to him by Cole Hawlings, he asks,

'Why did you go back into the Past?' ...

'Why?' Arnold said. 'Because of the dullness of the Time into which I was born.'¹⁷⁰

¹⁶⁹ This romanticising of the past is equally evident in the 'wilderness' writing of Deakin and Macfarlane, who evince a similar alienation from the post-industrial present. Class, physical discomfort and cruelty are largely omitted from such accounts. In actual fact the natural world was under continued attack from humans in the past as it is today, but historical accuracy is not the point: Deakin's writing, like Ferry and Scruton's advocacy of the hunt, is testimony to a fundamental disconnect with present-day England.

¹⁷⁰ John Masfield, *The Box of Delights* (London, 2011), p. 221.

This page has been left blank intentionally

Chapter 7

Conclusion

Peter Beckford, as usual, has put the truth simply and plainly: 'It is said, there is a pleasure in being mad, which only mad men know; and it is the enthusiasm, I believe, of fox-hunting, which is its best support; strip it of that, and you then, I think, had better let it quite alone.'

Darton, *Surtees to Sassoon*, p. 72

To estimate aright the effect of hunting on politics and society in England might be a task not unworthy of some grave historian of the future.

T.H. Dale, *History of the Belvoir Hunt*, p. 11

Neither the arguments advanced in support of fox hunting or against it are rational. Fox hunters continue to insist that it is the best method of pest control, an argument which some might say had been effectively demolished in the early nineteenth-century courtroom. In Beckford's time the courts ruled that hunting was indeed the best way to kill foxes, but as early as the first decade of the nineteenth century appeals were made querying 'whether the master or huntsman who followed a fox onto another's land and took with him a hundred or so horsemen was in fact doing no more than was necessary' to achieve this end.¹ The most famous case in this regard was *Essex v. Capel* (1809), discussed in Chapter 2, which pitted the vicar of Watford, MFH of the Berkeley Hunt, against his own half-brother, the fifth Earl of Essex. Serjeant Shepherd, appearing for the plaintiff, argued that 'the avowed object' of fox hunters was not to eliminate an agricultural pest but 'to preserve those noxious vermin'² and Lord Ellenborough, then chief justice of England, agreed: 'Can it possibly be supposed that ... gentlemen hunt for the mere purpose of killing vermin, and not for their diversion? ... Can any man of common sense hesitate in saying that the principal motive and inducement was not the killing of vermin, but the enjoyment of the sport and diversion of the chace?'³ The court, famously, found for the plaintiff – although it is equally famous that the

¹ Judge Buller, *Gundry v. Feltham* (1788), quoted in E.W. Bovill, *English Country Life, 1780–1830* (London, 1959), p. 223; *ibid.*, p. 223.

² The pest control argument is also made a nonsense of by the fact that foxes were deliberately preserved in England and imported from the Continent when necessary. See Bovill, pp. 214–27; Raymond Carr, *English Fox Hunting: A History* (London, 1976), pp. 110–14; David C. Itzkowitz, *Peculiar Privilege: A Social History of Foxhunting, 1753–1885* (Hassocks, Sussex, 1977), pp. 116–17.

³ *Essex v. Capel*.

legal decision did nothing to prevent the growth of fox hunting. Most landowners chose to ignore their legal rights.

When, two years later, the Berkeley Hunt found itself back in the courtroom, again charged with trespass and confronting Serjeant Shepherd, the huntsman pleaded he had committed the trespass to destroy a noxious animal. ‘Could the Jury’, asked Shepherd, ‘really believe that this was the motive of the Berkeley Hunting Club? Were they associated as a body of *vermin-catchers*, who had met together and united for the patriotic purpose of destroying noxious animals, to improve the husbandry of the country?’ He compared the rat or mole catcher with the fox hunter: all three ‘wore the livery of their profession’ yet he could not believe that fox hunters, whose numbers included clergymen and City bankers, intended by doing so to signify that they ‘were a club of vermin-catchers’.⁴

By the 1860s some fox hunters, such as Anthony Trollope, were arguing that sport and diversion were in themselves sufficient justification for the pursuit and killing of a wild animal. Opinion remains divided on this issue; critics of the sport also stubbornly persist in the view expressed by Richard Cobden that hunting is an aristocratic, feudal relic which has no place in modern society. But as early as *Essex v. Capel* middle-class urbanites had infiltrated the field: the alleged invasion of the countryside by non-resident Londoners was, in 1809, one of the causes of complaint. Continuities can also be found in the exasperation voiced over the centuries regarding the time spent by Parliament on sporting or animal welfare

⁴ ‘Home Circuit. Hertford Assizes, Monday, August 3. Fox-hunting. Johnson v. Oldacre’. *The Times*, 7 August 1811. Now, of course, when foxes have moved into cities, their overall numbers are unlikely to be determined by the efforts of traditional hunts and the vermin argument has even less purchase – although this has not stopped *The Telegraph* from pursuing it. In 2010, presumably encouraged by the upcoming election which held out an unrealised prospect of a Conservative majority that might have overturned the ban, the paper ran a slew of stories chronicling the dangers posed by urban foxes: to babies, children, cats and kittens, sleeping adults and penguins in the London zoo. See, e.g., ‘London’s fox epidemic: Let’s get hunting, Boris’, 7 June; ‘Fox attack on twin girls “like a horror movie,”’ ‘Fox attack mother demands action against urban menace’, 8 June; ‘I was bitten by a fox too, says nine-year-old girl’, 10 June; ‘Outfoxed! Urban foxes have become bolder than ever – and we are powerless to stop them’, 12 June; ‘Foxes attacking family pets as they invade homes and gardens’, 12 June; ‘Fox kills kitten in bedroom’, 26 August; ‘Fox bites woman’s ear as she sleeps’, 10 September; ‘Penguins killed by foxes at London Zoo’, 16 October. Hoaxsters responded to the frenzy in August of that year, posting on YouTube what appeared to be footage of a gang calling themselves Urban Foxhunters drugging a fox and clubbing it to death with a cricket bat in a London park. This video, which caused a brief public uproar, was subsequently revealed to be a joke at the media’s expense, shots of a purportedly live ‘fox’ in reality a dog with a fake tail, while the dead fox was stuffed. ‘London gang beat fox to death in film posted on YouTube’, *The Guardian*, 4 August 2010; ‘Urban fox hunt video was hoax aimed at the media, say film-makers’, *ibid.*, 6 August. The *Telegraph* didn’t give up: see, ‘The rise and fall of Mr Fox’, 5 November 2010. ‘Fisherman in furry “deer hunter” hat bitten by a fox as he slept’, 14 April 2011.

issues: Guardian columnist Polly Toynbee's irritation over the parliamentary attention devoted in the early twenty-first century to foxes at the expense of other issues has historical precedent. William Windham had argued in 1800 that Parliament's 'time was too precious, "in times like the present, when questions of vital importance are hourly pressing on our attention"' to waste on cruelty legislation; "'they were legislating for pigeons,'" Earl Fortescue would complain similarly in 1884, ... "when affairs at home and abroad were calling urgently for attention".⁵ If fox hunting is the Englishman's 'peculiar privilege', the ink spilt and parliamentary hours consumed by debate on the subject are also peculiarly English.

The parameters of that debate, I have argued, were established as early as 1781, in the very infancy of the sport. At that time the characterisation of fox hunting as combining 'tyranny and barbarity' had little resonance with the English population at large. In 1781 the 'rights' of people, let alone animals, were only beginning to be advanced, and for almost a century 'N's criticisms fell on deaf ears. In the nineteenth century landowners consolidated their estates at the expense of tenant farmers who were ill placed to protest. During the Napoleonic wars, landlord and farmer alike benefitted from high prices, and although after those wars were concluded the landed elite came under attack from a newly important, and newly wealthy, middle class, as the nineteenth century progressed the social aspirations of that class meant that, rather than condemning blood sports, many proved eager participants. Within Parliament even those radicals who championed animal welfare tended to be sportsmen themselves and did not extend their sympathies to the fox. Not until 1869 did the morality of fox hunting become a subject of sustained public debate, and by the century's end majority opinion continued to side with the hunters rather than the hunted.

The social politics of fox hunting would change markedly, and become far more complex, in the twentieth century. For the generation which survived the First World War the sport became emblematic of what they had fought to preserve. 'England' was defined as rural, even as demographic trends worked remorselessly in an opposite direction, and fox hunting became imbedded in rural identity, the incarnation of the world of the horse and the countryside rather than that of the motor car and the city. The British Field Sports Society and even more so its successor, the Countryside Alliance, played shrewdly – and doubtless with sincerity – on this association. From the post-First World War period fox hunting may have been acknowledged as an anachronism but it was also cherished and celebrated. Originating in the late seventeenth century and only becoming established in the late eighteenth, hunting was certainly not a 'feudal' pastime, but it was increasingly lauded as 'traditional' and regarded as worthy of preservation on that ground alone. In the early nineteenth century Englishmen took it as a given

⁵ Quoted in Brian Harrison, 'Animals and the State in Nineteenth-Century England', *English Historical Review*, 88 (October 1983): pp. 786–820 at p. 814.

that fox hunting was English; by the late twentieth century it was argued that the sport should continue *because* it was English.

In 1928 *The Times* commented, ‘hunting, like so many other good things, is an anachronism which survives only because it is securely based on public opinion and sustained by the good will of all affected and concerned’.⁶ Hunting’s anachronistic appeal, as we have seen, was analysed at length in the interwar period by writers such as Darton and Watson, Steel and Brock; later in the century Richard Thomas explored how hunting managed to survive in heavily urban, industrialised England.⁷ We might equally ask *why* this acknowledged anachronism survived. Writing in the early 1980s, Thomas had his own answer: ‘The hunting community longs for the apparently simple values of the past and out of this has grown a mythology about the social benefits of hunting ... The “golden age” of foxhunting, when Masters were powerful, horses plentiful, women knew their place and the minority who actively disapproved of hunting could be dismissed as cranks, was in the 19th century’.⁸ Such thinking has not entirely disappeared, that continued longing evident in the writing of Roger Scruton and Rory Knight Bruce. But Scruton and Knight Bruce are now in the minority, while the opinions not merely of Beckford’s anonymous reviewer but of Henry Salt, arch crank of the late nineteenth century, have become mainstream. After the Second World War the security of the sport of fox hunting was much less certain, as public opinion shifted and good will was lost.

This development owed in part to a broadening of animal welfare concerns – or, if you like, an increase in sentimentality about the animal world – to encompass even predators like the fox. From the second decade of the twentieth century hunting also became entangled in issues of national identity and the pro- and anti-hunting divide eventually lay heavily, although not entirely, along urban/rural lines. It might be argued that the cultural tension between urban and rural England evident in the 1671 changes to the game laws climaxed in the late twentieth-century debates over fox hunting, as the threat posed to traditional rural society by a new urban elite was ultimately realised. At the end of the nineteenth century T.H. Dale believed that the growth of fox hunting had united town and country. By the end of the twentieth century this particular blood sport served instead to divide them. Class politics also shifted. Strictly speaking, given the early twentieth-century transition from tenant farmers to owner occupiers, ‘N’s criticism of the tyranny of fox hunting no longer pertained: in fact, some reversed the tyranny argument, advocates of fox hunting now accusing the government of eroding the liberty of the subject by banning hunting.’⁹ By the late nineteenth

⁶ *The Times*, 17 November 1928.

⁷ Richard H. Thomas, *The Politics of Hunting* (Aldershot, 1983), p. 11.

⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 284.

⁹ See, e.g., Mark Pallis, ‘Democracy and the Wild Mammals (Hunting with Dogs) Bill’ (unpublished); or John Mortimer, quoted in ‘Stars and sun cheer Bicester’s last hunt’, *The Guardian*, 20 February 2005 to the effect that the ban outraged the liberty of the subject.

century, moreover, tenant farmers had been complaining not of the landed elite riding roughshod over their fields, but of the influx of wealthy businessmen. In the mid-twentieth century farmers and what remained of the aristocracy joined the common cause of fighting the mounting attack on their sport by animal welfare activists. But even as it became less of a reality, the tyranny argument gained in strength over the course of the twentieth century with the growth of Labour politics – and labour history. Fox hunting became tainted by its aristocratic past.

In his analysis of the twentieth-century hunting debate to the early 1980s Richard Thomas downplayed class, arguing that for most involved, ‘class is not of conscious significance’. He also claims that the causes of the antipathy to hunting had ‘gradually changed’.¹⁰ I have argued instead that criticisms rooted in class and cruelty had been an issue since 1781. These concerns evolved over time and while both sides of the hunting debate ‘have a vision of a return to a more natural harmony between man and animal’,¹¹ the campaign to abolish hunting with dogs in the late twentieth and early twenty-first century also reveals significant changes in English social structure and class relations. The eighteenth- and nineteenth-century resentment of the restrictions imposed by the game laws and embrace of fox hunting were turned on their head: a significant proportion of the middle classes no longer rushed to join in blood sports with aristocratic associations but wanted instead to prevent their continuation. In the twentieth century one of the traditional defences of fox hunting, that it provided the landed classes with a healthy, innocuous form of amusement and kept them from vice, collapsed as hunting itself came to be defined and condemned as aristocratic vice. The rise of sentiment and the animal rights movement initiated opposition to fox hunting and consistently underpinned public feeling, but the parliamentary ban achieved in the early twenty-first century owed primarily to politics, a politics which turned on class. Unlike their seventeenth-century counterparts, twenty-first century landed wealth did not have the political power to impose their world-view on urban Britain. And although it affected and has been deeply resented by a much broader cross-section of English society, the 2004 hunting ban may be seen as a political attempt to drive another nail into their (well-nailed) coffin.

While the goal of this book has been to set the ban in historical context, the story is not over. David Cameron, leader of the Conservative Party, pledged another free vote in the Commons on hunting with dogs and a majority Conservative government might very well have overturned the ban. Awareness of this prospect captured at least a degree of media interest.¹² The May 2010 election results, which

¹⁰ Thomas, p. 184.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, p. xi.

¹² See, e.g., ‘Expect fireworks as hunting rears its head’, *The Telegraph*, 6 November 2009; ‘The hunting ban is here to stay’, *The Guardian*, 18 February 2010; ‘Tally ho! It’s the hunting debate ... all over again’, *The Observer*, 21 February 2010; ‘The deepening countryside “war” over the hunting ban’, *The Telegraph*, 21 March 2010; ‘Foxhunting supporters target key marginal seats at general election’, *The Guardian*, 30 March 2010.

resulted in the unlikely alliance of the Conservatives and Liberal Democrats, meant that in the short term no such reversal was likely and by November of that year the *Telegraph* acknowledged that financial concerns had forced hunting off the political agenda.¹³ Fox hunters worry that as time passes the likelihood of a repeal of the ban diminishes. In practical terms, however, the 2004 legislation seems to have been no more effective than *Essex v. Capel* in curtailing the sport.¹⁴ Nor has it ended public discussion of fox hunting – and at the time of writing that discussion appears sympathetic rather than critical. In 2011 BBC Radio 4 aired a dramatisation of Surtees' *Jorrocks' Jaunts and Jollities* in the Classic Serial slot (April 24/May 2) and an Afternoon Play, 'Countrysides' (27 April), which explored a confrontation between a huntsman and an anti-hunt protestor. On *Thinking Allowed* (2 May 2011) Laurie Taylor interviewed sociologist Alison Acton on the relationship between hunting and the landscape, and in particular the relationship between fox hunters and farmers. In January 2012 *Open Country* examined the effects of the legal ban seven years on; in June of the same year Emma Griffin interviewed hunts on the post-ban survival of their sport.¹⁵ The debate continues – and the hunt rides on.

¹³ 'The rise and fall of Mr Fox'.

¹⁴ See, e.g., 'Why fox hunting is more popular than ever', *The Telegraph*, 6 November 2011.

¹⁵ 'Outfoxed: The Story of Hunting in Britain', BBC Radio 4, 28 May 2012.

Bibliography

Primary Sources

- Anon. *Memoirs of Dick, The Little Poney, supposed to have been written by himself; and published for the instruction and amusement of good boys and girls* (London, 1800).
- Anon. *Mental Amusement: Consisting of moral essays, allegories and tales, interspersed with poetical pieces* (London, 1797).
- Apsley, Lady (Viola Meeking Bathurst), and Lady Diana Sheddon, '*To Whom the Goddess ...*' *Hunting and Riding for Women* (London: Hutchinson, 1932).
- Beaufort, Duke of, *Fox-Hunting* (London: David & Charles, 1980).
- Beaufort, Duke of, and Mowbray Morris, *Hunting*, 4th ed. (London: Longmans, Green, and Co., 1888).
- Beckford, Peter, *Thoughts on Hunting* (London, 1781; 2nd ed., 1782).
- Benn, Tony, *Conflicts of Interest: Diaries 1977–80*, ed. Ruth Winstone (London: Hutchinson, 1990).
- . *The End of an Era: Diaries 1980–90*, ed. Ruth Winstone (London: Hutchinson, 1992).
- Betjeman, John, *Letters Volume One: 1926–1951*, ed. Candida Lycett Green (London: Methuen, 1994).
- Blair, Tony, *A Journey: My Political Life* (London: Hutchinson, 2010).
- Bourne, George [George Sturt], *Change in the Village* (London: Duckworth, 1912).
- 'Brook, David, *The Fox-Hunter's Week-end Book* (London: Seeley Service & Co., [1939]).
- Bromley Davenport, William, 'The Dream of an Old Meltonian.' In *Baily's Magazine of Sports and Pastimes*, 42 (July 1884): 364–7.
- Buxton, Meriel, *Ladies of the Chase* (London: The Sportsman's Press, 1987).
- Byng, John, Viscount Torrington, *The Torrington Diaries* (4 vols, New York: Barnes and Noble, 1970).
- Campbell, Alastair, *The Alastair Campbell Diaries, Volume Two: Power and the People, 1997–1999* (London: Cornerstone, 2011).
- . *The Alastair Campbell Diaries, Volume Three: Power and Responsibility, 1999–2001* (London: Cornerstone, 2011).
- . *The Blair Years: Extracts from the Alastair Campbell Diaries* (London: Hutchinson, 2007).
- Carbery, Mary, *Happy World: The Story of a Victorian Childhood* (London: Longmans, Green & co, 1941).

- Carlisle, Richard Howard, *Fox-Hunting Past & Present* (London: John Lane, 1908).
- Chaffin, William, *Anecdotes and History of Cranborne Chase* (London, 1818).
- Chesterfield, Earl of (Philip Dormer Stanhope), *Letters to his Son* (5 vols, London, 1845).
- Chitty, Joseph, *A Treatise on the Game Laws and on Fisheries*, 2nd ed. (London, 1816).
- Clayton, Michael, *The Chase: A Modern Guide to Foxhunting*, new ed. (London: Hutchinson, 1989).
- . *The Duke of Rutland's Hounds: The Belvoir* (London: Merlin Unwin Books, 2011).
- . *Endangered Species: Foxhunting – the history, the passion and the fight for survival* (London: Swan Hill Press, 2004).
- . *Foxhunting in Paradise* (London: John Murray, 1993).
- . *Prince Charles: Horseman* (London: Hutchinson, 1987).
- Cobbett, William, *Rural Rides* (2 vols, 1830; London: J.M. Dent, 1912).
- Colegate, Isobel, *The Shooting Party* (London: Hamish Hamilton, 1980).
- Cook, John, *Observations on Fox-Hunting* (1826; London: Edward Arnold, 1922).
- ‘Country Squire’, *An Essay on Hunting* (London, 1733).
- Crowe, Henry, *Zoophilos; or, Considerations on the Moral Treatment of Inferior Animals*, 2nd ed. (London: Longman, 1820).
- Cuming, E.D. (ed.), *Squire Osbaldeston: His Autobiography* (London: John Lane, 1926).
- Dale, T.F., *The History of the Belvoir Hunt* (Westminster, 1899).
- Daniel, William, *Rural Sports* (London, 1801).
- Darton, F.J. Harvey, *From Surtees to Sassoon: Some English Contrasts* (London: Morley & Mitchell Kennerley Jr, 1931).
- Davies, E.W.L., *The Out-of-Door Life of the Rev. John Russell* (London, 1883).
- Deakin, Roger, *Notes from Walnut Tree Farm* (London: Hamish Hamilton, 2008).
- . *Wildwood: A Journey Through Trees* (London: Hamish Hamilton, 2007).
- Delmé Radcliffe, Frederick Peter, *The Noble Science: A Few General Ideas on Fox-Hunting, for the Use of the Rising Generation of Sportsmen*, 3rd ed. (London: George Routledge and Sons, 1875).
- Devonshire, Deborah, *Wait for Me! Memoirs of the Youngest Mitford Sister* (London: John Murray, 2010).
- Dickens, Monica, *Cobbler's Dream* (London: Michael Joseph, 1963).
- . *Mariana* (1940; London: Penguin, 1950).
- . *An Open Book* (London: Heinemann, 1978).
- Dixie, Lady Florence Caroline, *Horrors of Sport* (London, 1891).
- . *The Mercilessness of Sport* (London, 1901).
- Eardley-Wilmot, John Eardley, *A Famous Fox-Hunter: Reminiscences of the Late Thomas Assheton Smith, Esq; Or, The Pursuits of an English Country Gentleman*, 5th ed. (London, 1893).
- Edwards, Lionel, *Famous Foxhunters* (London: Eyre and Spottiswoode, 1932).

- . *Reminiscences of a Sporting Artist* (London: Putnam & Co., 1947).
- Egerton Warburton, Rowland, *Hunting Songs* (London, 1856).
- Elliot, John, and Edward Elliot, *Fifty Years of Foxhunting with the Grafton and Other Packs of Hounds* (London, 1900).
- Ellis, Maudie, *The Squire of Bentley (Mrs Cheape)* (London: Blackwood, 1926).
- Fielding, Henry, *Tom Jones* (London, 1749).
- Forster, E.M., *Howards End* (1910; London: Penguin, 1983).
- Frederick, Sir Charles, *Fox-Hunting*, The Lonsdale Library, vol. 7 (London: Seeley, Service & Co., 1930).
- Freeman, E.A., 'The Controversy on Field Sports,' *Fortnightly Review*, 8 (December 1870): 674–91.
- . 'The Morality of Field Sports.' *Fortnightly Review*, 6 (October 1869): 353–85.
- Froude, James Anthony, 'Cheneys and the House of Russell,' in *Short Studies on Great Subjects*, vol. 4 (London: Longmans, Green, and Co., 1867).
- George, Janet, *A Rural Uprising: The Battle to Save Hunting with Hounds* (London: J.A. Allen, 1999).
- Grahame, Kenneth. *The Wind in the Willows* (1908; Dorking: Templar Publishing, 2007).
- Greville, Lady Violet, *Ladies in the Field: Sketches of Sport* (New York, 1894).
- Hawkes, Jacquetta, *A Land* (1951; Boston: Beacon Books, 1991).
- Hawkes, John, *The Meynellian Science* (London, 1808).
- Hayes, Alice, *The Horsewoman: A Practical Guide to Side-Saddle Riding*, 2nd ed. (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1903).
- Hieover, Harry [Charles Bindley], *The Hunting-Field*, 2nd ed. (London: Longman, Brown, Green, Longmans & Roberts, 1859).
- . *Sporting Facts and Sporting Fancies* (London, 1853).
- . *The Sporting World* (London, 1858).
- Howitt, William, *The Rural Life of England* (2 vols, London: Longman, 1838).
- Kingsley, Charles, 'My Winter Garden', *Fraser's Magazine*, 57 (April 1858): 408–25.
- Knight Bruce, Rory, 'Mad, bad and dangerous – Piscose sermon on The Mound', *The Field* (November 2006): 11.
- . *Red Letter Days: Hunting across the British Isles* (Wykey, Shrewsbury: Quiller, 2008).
- Lawrence, John, *British Field Sports; embracing practical instructions in shooting – hunting – coursing – racing – cocking – fishing, &c., with observations on the breaking and training of dogs and horses; also, the management of fowling pieces, and all other sporting implements* (London: Sherwood, Neely, and Jones, 1818).
- . *A Philosophical and Practical Treatise on Horses, and on the Moral Duties of Man towards the Brute Creation* (2 vols, London: Longman, 1796–8).
- Locke, John, *A Treatise on the Game Laws of England and Wales* (London, 1866).
- Macfarlane, Robert, *The Wild Places* (London: Granta, 2007).

- Masefield, John, *The Box of Delights* (1935; London: Egmont, 2011).
- . *The Hawbucks* (London: William Heinemann, 1929).
- . *The Midnight Folk* (1927; New York: New York Review Children's Connection, 2007).
- . *Reynard the Fox*, ed. and intro. Philip W. Errington (1919; London: Fyfield Books, 2008).
- . *Right Royal* (London: William Heinemann, 1920).
- Mitford, Nancy, *The Pursuit of Love and Love in a Cold Climate* (1945; 1949. Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1980).
- ‘N’, ‘Article VI, *Thoughts on Hunting*’, *Monthly Review* (September 1781): 211–20.
- Nimrod, *The Life of a Sportsman* (1842; London, 1874).
- Paget, Guy, and Lionel Irvine, *The Flying Parson and Dick Christian* (Leicester: Edgar Backus, 1934).
- Primatt, Humphry, *A Dissertation on the Duty of Mercy and the Sin of Cruelty to Brute Animals* (London, 1776).
- Pullein-Thompson, Josephine, Diana and Christine, *Fair Girls and Grey Horses: Memoirs of a Country Childhood* (London: Allison and Busby, 1997).
- Pye-Smith, Charlie, *Rural Rites: Hunting and the Politics of Prejudice* (London: All Party Parliamentary Middle Way Group, 2006).
- Richardson, Charles, *The Complete Foxhunter* (London: Methuen, 1908).
- Russell, Bertrand and Patricia (eds), *The Amberley Papers: The Letters and Diaries of Lord and Lady Amberley* (London: W.W. Norton, 1937).
- Ruskin, John, *Modern Painters* (5 vols, New York, 1863).
- ‘Saki’ [Hector Hugh Munro]. ‘Esme’. In *The Complete Works of Saki* (New York: Doubleday, 1976).
- Salt, Henry, *Animal's Rights Considered in Relation to Social Progress* (1892; London: Centaur Press, 1980).
- . *The Ethics of Corporal Punishment* (London: Fifeild, 1907).
- . *Eton under Hornby: Some Reminiscences and Reflections* (London: Fifeild, 1910).
- . *The Flogging Craze: A Statement of the Case Against Corporal Punishment* (London: G. Allen & Unwin, 1916).
- . *The Nursery of Toryism: Reminiscences of Eton under Hornby* (London: Fifeild, 1911).
- . *The Savour of Salt: A Henry Salt Anthology* (Fontwell, Sussex: Centaur Press, 1989).
- . *Seventy Years Among Savages* (London: George Allen, 1921).
- Sassoon, Siegfried, *Memoirs of a Fox-Hunting Man* (1928; London: Faber, 1975).
- Scrutator, *The Science of Foxhunting and Management of the Kennel* (London: George Routledge, 1868).
- Scruton, Roger, *News from Somewhere: On Settling* (London: Continuum, 2004).
- . *On Hunting* (London: Yellow Jersey Press, 1998).
- Sewell, Anna, *Black Beauty: The Autobiography of a Horse* (1877; New York, 1895).

- Somerville, William, *The Chace* (London, 1735).
- Steel, Anthony, *Jorrocks's England* (London: Methuen, 1932).
- Stoppard, Sir Tom, *Rock'n'Roll* (London: Faber, 2008).
- Stratton, J., *Royal Sports* (London: William Reeves, 1891).
- Styles, John, *The Animal Creation: Its Claims on our Humanity Stated and Claimed* (London, [1839]).
- Surtees, Robert S., *The Analysis of the Hunting Field* (London, 1847).
- . *Handley Cross; or, Mr Jorrocks's Hunt* (1843; New York: D. Appleton, 1903).
- . *Hillingdon Hall; or, The Cockney Squire* (1845; Stroud, UK: Nonsuch Publishing, 2006).
- . *Jorrocks' Jaunts and Jollities* (1838; Teddington, UK: Echo Library 2006).
- . *Mr. Facey Romford's Hounds* (1865; Stroud, UK: Nonsuch Publishing, 2006).
- . *Mr. Sponge's Sporting Tour* (1853; Stroud, UK: Nonsuch Publishing, 2006).
- Taylor, Helen, 'A few words on Mr Trollope's defence of fox-hunting', *Fortnightly Review*, 7 (1870): 63–8.
- Thelwell, Norman, *Angels on Horseback* (London: Methuen, 1957).
- Trevelyan, G.M., *English Social History: A Survey of Six Centuries, Chaucer to Queen Victoria* (London: Longmans, Green, 1943).
- . *Must England's Beauty Perish?: A Plea on behalf of the National Trust for places of historic interest or natural Beauty* (London: Faber & Gwyer, 1929).
- Trevor-Roper, Hugh, 'William Somerville: The Poet of the Chase', *Country Life* (10 June 1939): 614–15.
- Trollope, Anthony, *The American Senator* (1876–7; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991).
- . *An Autobiography* (2 vols, Edinburgh, 1883).
- . *The Eustace Diamonds* (1873; Harmondsworth: Penguin, 2004).
- . *Hunting Sketches*. Illus., intro. By Lionel Edwards (1865; New York: John Day Co., 1952).
- . *Marion Fay* (1881–2; London: Trollope Society, 1997).
- . 'Mr. Freeman on the Morality of Hunting', *Fortnightly Review*, 6 (1869): 616–25.
- . 'On Hunting.' In *British Sports and Pastimes, 1868* (London: Virtue & Co., 1868).
- Watson, Frederick, *Robert Smith Surtees: A Critical Study* (London: George G. Harrap & Co., 1933).
- Waugh, Evelyn, *Brideshead Revisited* (1945; London: Penguin, 1988).
- . *A Handful of Dust* (1934; Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1951).
- White, Gilbert, *The Natural History of Selborne* (1789; London: Thames & Hudson, 2004).

- Whyte-Melville, George J., *Digby Grand: An Autobiography* (1853; London: W. Thacker & Co., 1900).
- . *Market Harborough; or, How Mr Sawyer went to the Shires* (1861; Feltham, Middlesex: Country Life, 1984).
- . *Riding Recollections* (1875; London: Alston Rivers, n.d.)
- Williams, Thomas [Lord Williams of Barnburgh], *Digging for Britain* (London: Hutchinson & Co., 1965).
- Willoughby de Broke, Baron (Richard Greville Verney), *The Passing Years* (London, 1924).
- . *The Sport of Our Ancestors: Being a Collection of Prose and Verse Setting Forth the Sport of Fox-Hunting as They Knew It* (London: Dutton, 1921).
- Windham, William, *Speeches in Parliament, of the Right Honourable William Windham* (3 vols, London: Longman, 1812).
- . *The Windham Papers: The Life and Correspondence of the Rt. Hon. William Windham 1750–1810* (2 vols, London: Herbert Jenkins Ltd., 1913).
- Woodforde, James, *The Diary of a Country Parson*, vol. 1 (London: Oxford University Press, 1926).
- Woolf, Virginia, *The Diary of Virginia Woolf* (5 vols, Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1977–1985).
- . *The Flight of the Mind. The Letters of Virginia Woolf, Volume 1: 1888–1912* (London: Hogarth Press, 1975).
- . ‘Jack Mytton.’ In *The Common Reader*, 2nd series (1932; New York: Harcourt, Brace and Co., 1948).
- . *Jacob’s Room* (1922; London: Granada, 1976).
- . *A Passionate Apprentice: The Early Journals 1897–1909*, ed. Mitchell A. Leaska (Toronto: Lester & Orpen Dennys, 1990).
- . ‘The Shooting Party’. In *The Complete Shorter Fiction of Virginia Woolf*. Rev. ed., ed. Susan Dick (London: Hogarth Press, 1989).
- . *The Voyage Out* (1915; London: Granada, 1978).
- . *The Waves* (1931; London: Penguin, 1951).
- Wordsworth, William, *The Excursion* (London, 1814).
- Wright, Clarissa Dickson, *Rifling through my Drawers* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 2009).
- . *Spilling the Beans* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 2007).
- Young, Arthur, *A Tour in Ireland*, 2nd ed. (2 vols, London: T. Cadell, 1780).
- Young, Thomas, *An Essay on Humanity to Animals* (London: T. Cadell, 1798).

Children’s Literature

- Cannan, Joanna, *Another Pony for Jean* (London: Collins, 1938).
- . *More Ponies for Jean* (London: Collins, 1943).
- . *A Pony for Jean* (London: John Lane, 1936).
- Christopher, John, *The Guardians* (1970; Harmondsworth: Puffin Books, 1973).
- Cumming, Primrose, *Silver Snaffles* (1937; Edinburgh: Fidra Books, 2007).

- . *The Wednesday Pony* (London: Blackie, 1939).
- Dickens, Monica, *Dora at Follyfoot* (London: Piccolo, 1972).
- . *Follyfoot* (London: Piccolo, 1971).
- . *The House at World's End* (1970; London: Piccolo, 1972).
- . *Spring Comes to World's End* (1972; London: Piccolo, 1973).
- . *Summer at World's End* (1971; London: Piccolo, 1972).
- . *World's End in Winter* (1972; London: Piccolo, 1973).
- Ferguson, Ruby, *Jill Enjoys her Ponies* (1954; London: Knight, 1972).
- . *Jill has Two Ponies* (1952; London: Knight, 1968).
- . *Jill and the Perfect Pony* (1959; London: Knight, 1969).
- . *Jill's Gymkhana* (1949; London: Knight, 1970).
- . *Jill's Pony Trek* (1962; London: Knight, 1972).
- . *Jill's Riding Club* (1956; London: Knight, 1969).
- . *Pony Jobs for Jill* (1960; London: Knight, 1973).
- . *Rosettes for Jill* (1957; London: Knight, 1973).
- . *A Stable for Jill* (1951; London: Knight, 1968).
- 'Golden Gorse' [Muriel Wace], *Moorland Mousie* (London: Country Life, 1929).
- . *The Young Rider* (London: Country Life, 1928).
- Leitch, Patricia, *Dream of Fair Horses* (London: Collins, 1975).
- Lofting, Hugh, *Doctor Dolittle's Circus* (1924; Harmondsworth: Puffin Books, 1968).
- Masefield, John, *The Box of Delights* (1935; London: Egmont, 2011).
- Morpurgo, Michael, *War Horse* (London: Kaye & Ward, 1982).
- Oliver, Marjorie Mary Oliver, and Eva Ducat, *The Ponies of Bunts and the Adventures of the Children Who Rode Them* (London: Country Life, 1933).
- Peyton, K.M., *The Edge of the Cloud* (1969; Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1980).
- . *Flambards* (1967; Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1980).
- . *Flambards in Summer* (1969; Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1980).
- . *Fly-by-Night* (1968; Edinburgh: Fidra Books, 2007).
- . *A Pattern of Roses* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1972).
- . *The Team* (1975; Edinburgh: Fidra Books, 2008).
- Pullein-Thompson, Christine, *A Day to Go Hunting* (1956; London: Armada, 1969).
- . *Goodbye to Hounds* (1952; London: Armada, 1974).
- . *I Carried the Horn* (1951; London: Collins, 1958).
- . *We Hunted Hounds* (London: Collins, 1949; rev. ed. London: Allen Junior Fiction, 1990).
- Pullein-Thompson, Diana, *The Hermit's Horse* (London: Armada, 1974).
- . *Janet Must Ride* (1953; London: Armada, 1973).
- Pullein-Thompson, Josephine, *One Day Event* (1954; London: Armada, 1974).
- . *Pony Club Team* (1950; London: Armada, 1973).
- . *Show Jumping Secret* (1955; London: Armada, 1969).
- Pullein-Thompson, Josephine, Christine and Diana, *It Began with Picotee* (London: A. & C. Black, 1946).

Newspapers and Serials

The Field.
The Guardian.
The Independent.
Sporting Magazine.
The Telegraph.
The Times.

Government Documents

Parliamentary Debates (*Hansard*).
Report of the Committee on Cruelty to Wild Animals, Cmd. 8266 (June 1951) (Scott Henderson).
Report of the Committee of Inquiry into Hunting with Dogs in England and Wales (June 2000) (Burns).

Secondary Literature

Babington Smith, Constance, *John Masefield: A Life* (New York: Macmillan, 1978).
 Barnes, Donald Grove, *The History of the English Corn Laws from 1660–1846* (London: George Routledge, 1930).
 Benn, Caroline, *Keir Hardie* (London: Hutchison, 1992).
 Blishen, Edward, *Hugh Lofting* (London: Bodley Head, 1968).
 Boddice, Rob, 'Manliness and the "Morality of Field Sports": E.A. Freeman and Anthony Trollope, 1869–71', *The Historian*, 70/1 (February 2008): 1–29.
 Bovill, E.W., *English Country Life, 1780–1830* (London: Oxford University Press, 1962).
 Butts, Dennis, 'Writers for Children: K.M. Peyton', *The Use of English*, 23 (Spring 1972): 195–202.
 Cadogan, Mary, and Patricia Craig, *You're a Brick, Angela! A New Look at Girls' Fiction from 1839 to 1975* (London: Victor Gollancz, 1976).
 Cannadine, David, *G.M. Trevelyan: A Life in History* (London: HarperCollins, 1992).
 ———. 'Review', *Social History*, 3/3 (October 1978): 385–7.
 Carr, Raymond, *English Fox Hunting: A History* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicholson, 1976).
 Chambers, J. D., 'Enclosure and Labour Supply in the Industrial Revolution', in E.L. Jones (ed.), *Agriculture and Economic Growth in England 1650–1815* (London: Methuen, 1967).
 Chambers, J.D., and G.E. Mingay, *The Agricultural Revolution, 1750–1880* (London: Batsford, 1966).

- Collins, George E., *History of the Brocklesby Hounds, 1700–1901* (London: S. Low, Martson & Co., 1901).
- Collison, Robert L., 'R.S. Surtees: Satirist and Sociologist', *Nineteenth-Century Fiction*, 7/3 (1952): 202–7.
- Cone, Carl B. (ed.), *Hounds in the Morning: Sundry Sports of Merry England. Selections from The Sporting Magazine, 1792–1836* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1981).
- Cooper, Leonard, *R.S. Surtees* (London: A. Barker, 1952).
- Crouch, Marcus, *The Nesbit Tradition: The Children's Novel in England, 1945–1970* (London: Benny Hardouin, 1972).
- Dickson, Lovat (ed.), *The Green Leaf: A Tribute to Grey Owl* (London: Lovat Dickson Ltd., 1938).
- Fairholme, Edward G., and Wellesley Pain, *A Century of Work for Animals: The History of the R.S.P.C.A.* (London: John Murray, 1924).
- Fletcher, Anthony, *Growing Up in England: The Experience of Childhood 1600–1914* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2008).
- Forrest, Susanna, *If Wishes were Horses: A Memoir of Equine Obsession* (London: Atlantic Books, 2012).
- Gash, Norman, *Robert Surtees and Early Victorian Society* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1993).
- Gregory, Troy, 'R.S. Surtees and the Rise of Victorian Sporting Literature' (unpublished PhD thesis, University of Western Ontario, 2002).
- Griffin, Emma, *Blood Sport: Hunting in Britain Since 1066* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2007).
- Hammond, John, and Barbara Hammond, *The Village Labourer, 1760–1832: A Study in the Government of England before the Reform Bill* (London: Longmans, Green, 1911).
- Harrison, Brian, 'Animals and the State in Nineteenth-Century England', *English Historical Review*, 88 (October 1973): 786–820.
- Hay, Douglas, 'Crime, Authority and the Criminal Law: Staffordshire, 1750–1800', PhD thesis, University of Warwick, 1975.
- . 'Hanging and the English Judges: The Judicial Politics of Retention and Abolition', in David Garland, Randall McGowen and Michael Meranze (eds), *America's Death Penalty: Between Past and Present* (New York: New York University Press, 2011).
- . 'Poaching and the Game Laws on Cannock Chase.' In *Albion's Fatal Tree: Crime and Society in Eighteenth Century England*, ed. Douglas Hay et al. (New York: Pantheon, 1975).
- Heffer, Eric, *Never a Yes Man* (London: Routledge, 1992).
- Hendrick, George, *Henry Salt: Humanitarian Reformer and Man of Letters* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1977).
- Hibberd, Dominic, 'The Flambards Trilogy: Objections to a Winner', *Children's Literature in Education*, 3/2 (July 1972): 5–15.

- Higginson, A. Henry, *The Meynell of the West. Being a Biography of James John Farquharson Esquire, Master of Foxhounds 1806–1858* (London: Collins, 1936).
- . *Peter Beckford Esquire: Sportsman, Traveller, Man of Letters: A Biography* (London: Collins, 1937).
- Hinde, Wendy, *Richard Cobden: A Victorian Outsider*. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1987).
- Itzkowitz, David C., *Peculiar Privilege: A Social History of Foxhunting, 1753–1885* (Hassocks, Sussex: Harvester Press, 1977).
- Keenleyside, Heather (ed.), *British It-Narratives, 1750–1830*, vol. 2: *Animals* (London: Pickering & Chatto, 2012).
- Langford, Paul, *Englishness Identified: Manners and Character, 1650–1850* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000).
- Langguth, A.J., *Saki: A Life of Hector Hugh Munro* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1981).
- Lewis, Gifford, *Somerville and Ross: The World of the Irish RM* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1985).
- Longrigg, Roger, *The History of Foxhunting* (London: Macmillan, 1975).
- Lynam, Shevawn, *Humanity Dick: A Biography of Richard Martin, MP, 1754–1834* (London: Hamish Hamilton, 1975).
- McGowen, Randall, ‘Cruel Inflictions and the Claims of Humanity in Nineteenth-Century England’, in Katherine Watson (ed.), *Assaulting the Past* (Cambridge: Cambridge Scholars’ Press, 2007), 38–57.
- Malcolmson, Robert W., *Popular Recreations in English Society, 1700–1850* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1973).
- Manning, Roger B., *Hunters and Poachers: A Social and Cultural History of Unlawful Hunting in England, 1485–1640* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1993).
- Mingay, G.E., *Parliamentary Enclosure in England: An Introduction to its Causes, Incidence and Impact 1750–1850* (London: Longman, 1997).
- Morgan, Kenneth O., *Keir Hardie: Radical and Socialist* (London: Weidenfeld & Nicholson, 1975).
- Moss, A., *Valiant Crusade: The History of the RSPCA* (London: Cassell, 1961).
- Mullen, Richard, with James Munson, *The Penguin Companion to Trollope* (London: Penguin, 1996).
- Munsche, P.B., *Gentlemen and Poachers: The English Game Laws 1671–1831* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981).
- Murry, John Middleton, ‘The Nostalgia of Mr Masefield.’ In *Aspects of Literature* (London: W. Collins, 1920).
- Naipaul, V.S. *The Enigma of Arrival* (London: Penguin, 1987).
- Nangle, Benjamin Christie, *The Monthly Review, First Series, 1749–1789. Indexes of Contributors and Articles* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1934).
- Neeson, J.M., *Commoners: Common Right, Enclosure and Social Change in England, 1700–1820* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993).

- Neumann, Bonnie Rayford, *Robert Smith Surtees* (Boston: Twayne Publishers, 1978).
- Newall, Venetia, 'The Unspeakable in Pursuit of the Uneatable: Some Comments on Fox-Hunting', *Folklore*, 94/1 (1983): 86–90.
- Noakes, Aubrey, *Horses, Hounds, and Humans: Being the Dramatized Story of R.S. Surtees* (London: Oldbourne, 1957).
- O'Malley, Andrew, *The Making of the Modern Child: Children's Literature and Childhood in the Late Eighteenth Century* (New York: Routledge, 2003).
- Orwin, C.S., and C.S. Orwin, *The Open Fields* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1938).
- Paxman, Jeremy, *The English: A Portrait of a People* (1998; repr. Woodstock and New York: Overlook Press, 2000).
- Perkins, David, 'Compassion for Animals and Radical Politics: Coleridge's "To a Young Ass"', *ELH*, 65/4 (1998): 929–44.
- . 'Cowper's Hares', *Eighteenth-Century Life*, 20 n.s. 2 (1996): 57–69.
- . 'Wordsworth and the Polemic Against Hunting: "Hart-Leap Well"', *Nineteenth-Century Literature*, 52/4 (March 1998): 21–45.
- Ray, Colin, "'The Edge of the Cloud' – A Reply to Dominic Hibberd", *Children's Literature in Education*, 3/3 (November 1972): 5–6.
- Reid, Fred, *Keir Hardie: The Making of a Socialist* (London: Croom Helm, 1978).
- Ridley, Jane, *Fox Hunting* (London: Collins, 1990).
- Robinson, Robert, *Thomas Bewick: His Life and Times* (1887; Newcastle upon Tyne: Graham, 1972).
- Roper, *Reviewing before the Edinburgh, 1788–1802* (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 1978).
- Rowbotham, Sheila, *Edward Carpenter: A Life of Liberty and Love* (London: Verso, 2009).
- Schmidt, Gary D., *Hugh Lofting* (New York: Twayne, 1992).
- Sisman, Adam, *Hugh Trevor-Roper: The Biography* (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 2010).
- Smith, Donald B., *From the Land of Shadows: The Making of Grey Owl* (Saskatoon: Western Producer Prairie Books, 1990).
- Spalding, Frances, *Vanessa Bell* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1983).
- Spark, Muriel, *John Masefield* (London: John Nevill, 1953).
- Stewart, William, *J. Keir Hardie: A Biography* (London: Independent Labour Party, 1921).
- Swift, Katherine, *The Morville Hours* (London: Bloomsbury, 2008).
- Thomas, Keith, *Man and the Natural World: Changing Attitudes in England 1500–1800* (1983; London: Penguin, 1984).
- Thomas, Richard H., *The Politics of Hunting* (Aldershot: Gower Publishing Co, 1983).
- Thompson, F.M.L., *English Landed Society in the Nineteenth Century* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1963).
- . *Gentrification and the Enterprise Culture: Britain 1780–1980* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001).

- Tichelar, Michael, “‘Putting Animals into Politics’: The Labour Party and Hunting in the First Half of the Twentieth Century’, *Rural History*, 17 (2006): 213–34.
- Walker, Stella A., *Sporting Art: England 1700–1900* (New York: Clarkson N. Potter, 1972).
- Watson, J.N.P., *Lionel Edwards: Master of the Sporting Scene* (London: Sportsman’s Press, 1986).
- Welcome, John, *The Sporting World of R.S. Surtees* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1982).
- Winsten, Stephen, *Salt and his Circle* (London: Hutchinson & Co., 1951).
- Woods, Michael ‘Hunting: New Labour success or New Labour failure?’, in *New Labour’s Countryside: Rural Policy in Britain since 1997* (Bristol: The Policy Press, 2008).

Index

- Animal rights 57–8
- Aristocracy and hunting
 aristocratic packs 19–20
 representation in fiction 88–9, 91–2
- Ban on hunting with dogs (2004) 1,
 146–51
 post-ban survival of fox hunting 153–4,
 191–2
- Banks, Tony MP 141, 143
- BBC
 accused of bias against hunting 77
 post-ban broadcasts on hunting 192
- Beaufort, Dukes of 4, 19, 21n46, 31, 42,
 47, 81–2, 84, 100n48, 132, 134,
 160, 163
- Beckford, Peter, *Thoughts on Hunting* 1, 2,
 3–6, 14, 20, 22, 23, 27, 42, 51, 58,
 79, 122, 154, 159, 177, 187, 189
- Benn, Caroline 128, 129
- Benn, Tony MP 129, 138
- Blair, Tony 1, 142, 143, 146, 148
- Bradley, Peter MP 150
- British Field Sports Society (BFSS) 19,
 20, 189
 accuses BBC of bias 77
 aristocratic leadership of 30, 44
 origins of 131
 relationship with the National Farmers’
 Union 30–31, 134, 135
- Brock, David, *Fox-hunter’s Week-end Book*
 178, 190
- Bromley-Davenport, William
 ‘Dream of an Old Meltonian’ 13, 95–6
 ‘Lowesby Hall’ 1, 95–6
- Burns Committee and Report 43, 60,
 143–4, 147, 149
- Cadogan, Mary and Patricia Craig, *You’re
 a Brick, Angela!* 115–16
- Cameron, David MP 191
- Cannadine, David 14n3, 167, 168n84,
 170–71, 175
- Carr, Raymond, *English Fox Hunting* 2,
 13–14, 24, 25, 26–7, 28, 32, 33–4,
 35, 59, 68, 115n123
- Chaplin, Henry MFH 24, 26
- Children and fox hunting 19, 42–3
- Christopher, John, *The Guardians* 114
- Clayton, Michael 20, 44, 81, 100n48,
 178
- Clergymen
 as critics of fox hunting 53–7
 as fox hunters 31–3, 53–4, 55
- Cobbett, William, *Rural Rides* 15, 167,
 171, 176, 179, 184, 185
- Cobden, Richard MP 24, 35, 188
- Cocks, Seymour MP 131, 132
- Colegate, Isobel, *The Shooting Party*
 70n76
- Commons invasion 1, 146, 182
- Conservative Party and fox hunting 127,
 128n5, 146, 191–2
- Cook, John, *Observations on Fox-hunting*
 15, 25, 27, 160, 178
- Countryside Alliance 43, 147, 189
 involvement in Commons invasion
 2004 146
 Labour Party members of 127–8
 leadership of 45
 organizes pro-hunting rallies 153
 origins of 45
 publicity campaigns 48
- Cowper, William 54, 55
- Crowe, Henry, *Zoophilos* 55–7, 64, 82
- Cruelty to animals 51, 54–6, 59–60,
 79n132
 by lower classes 10, 60–64, 83
 by upper classes 10, 56, 70–73, 78,
 82–4, 92

- Dale, T.H., *History of the Belvoir Hunt* ix,
16–18, 20, 22, 26, 41, 47, 156, 160,
187, 190
- Darton, F.J. Harvey, *From Surtees to
Sassoon* 157, 159, 161–2, 163, 167,
169, 175, 179, 181, 184, 187, 190
- Deakin, Roger 124n154, 166, 183n161,
184, 185n169
- Delmé Radcliffe, Frederick, *The Noble
Science* 20, 22, 34–5, 183
- Dickens, Monica
Cobbler's Dream 112–13
Follyfoot 113
House at World's End series 113
Marianna 113
An Open Book 113
- Edwards, Lionel 33, 155
- Egerton Warburton, Rowland, *Hunting
Songs* 31, 52n5, 87n6
- Enclosure 171–4
- Essex v. *Capel* 16, 47n203, 187–8, 192
- Fairhurst, Frank MP 131, 136
- Farmers and fox hunting
cooperation a necessity 26
late nineteenth-century antagonism to
hunting 9, 28–30
the National Farmers' Union 30–31,
134
in the nineteenth-century field 14,
27–8
as sportsmen 6, 27
in the twentieth-century field 31, 44–5,
134–5
twenty-first-century support for
hunting 144
- Farquharsan, James MFH 22, 23
- Ferry, Otis 45–6, 146, 150, 156, 182–3,
185
- Fielding, Henry, *Tom Jones* 21
- Foot, Michael MP 140
- Forster, E.M., *Howards End* 102n57,
119n136, 176
- Foster, Michael MP 142–3
- Fox hunters
as boobies and bumpkins 3, 9, 11,
21–2, 66, 72
as cultured gentlemen 22
gender composition of 36–8, 41–2
as lovers of the countryside 160–61,
163–7, 178
the nineteenth-century field 15–18,
24–5, 26–35
as savages 70–71, 83
social aspirations of 9, 36
as 'spivs and drones' 135
twentieth-century field 44–6, 48, 135
twenty-first-century field 144
- Fox hunting
as anachronistic or archaic activity 11,
103, 125, 151, 179, 190
aristocratic associations of 10, 46, 47,
48, 125, 150, 179, 191
as aristocratic vice 191
as a conduit for aristocratic influence
18, 47
cost of 25, 33, 41n165, 45
and the countryside 163–7, 170–71,
175
the 'cricket of savages' 51, 82
democratic entry and participation in
10, 13–17, 33–5, 46–7, 96
divides town and country 9, 17–18,
190
an Establishment sport 45, 83–4
as feudal relic 1, 2, 24, 35, 36, 149,
151, 155, 188
as a guilty pleasure 103
as 'the image of war' 51, 69, 87, 160
justified as providing recreation 155,
188
and manliness 65, 71, 159–160
necessity and importance of the kill
52–3, 81–2, 109, 154
nineteenth-century radicals enraged by
35
nostalgic appeal of 11, 91, 155–65,
180, 184–5
origins and early history of 2–3
as a party-political issue 1, 80, 139,
191
polls on 80–81
as quintessentially English 91, 151,
156, 159–63, 189–90
as ritual or religion 181

- simultaneously aristocratic and democratic 19, 46
 as a system of 'tyranny and barbarity' 4, 6, 10, 82, 85, 125, 189
 as tradition 47, 153, 189–90
 unifies all classes of society 8, 13, 14
 unifies town and country 17–18, 190
 unsuitable pastime for intellectuals 35
- Foxes
 bag foxes 87, 160
 empathy for 98, 190
 Gillray's 'Corsican fox' 160
 undeserving of mercy 9, 51–2, 57, 58, 87, 109
 as an urban threat 188n4
- Freeman, E.A., 'Morality of Field Sports' 34, 67–9
- Game laws 7–8, 9–10, 27, 191
- Grahame, Kenneth, *The Wind in the Willows* 98n42, 166n75, 176
- Greenwood, Arthur MP 131, 132
- Greenwood, Sir Granville George MP 83
- Greville, Violet 38, 39, 40
- Grey Owl 77–8
- Griffin, Emma
Blood Sport 2n3, 3n10, 31n104, 35, 45, 47, 48–9
 'Outfoxed' 192
- Hardie, Keir MP 128–30
- Harrison, Brian 60, 63
- Hawkes, John, *The Meynellian Science* 13
- Hayes, Alice 30, 38–40, 115n123, 155
- Hedges 134
- Heffer, Eric MP 138, 139
- Hieover, Harry 16, 27–8, 32, 34, 37, 46, 47, 52
- Horse and Hound* 91, 92, 107, 180
- Horses
 hooves and hides preserved 53n10, 100
 and nostalgia 175–7
 ridden to death in hunting 58, 64–5
 welfare of 60, 61–2, 64–7, 83, 105, 112–13, 133
- Hounds
 breeding of 2–3
 discipline of 9
- Humanitarian League *see* Salt, Henry
- Hunt Saboteurs Association 79–80
- Hunting squires 21–4
- Itzkowitz, David C., *Peculiar Privilege* 1n1, 13n1, 14n3, 46, 47, 68
- Johnston, Philip 147, 151
- Kaufman, Gerald MP 145
- Kingsley, Charles 32, 46–7, 53–4, 159
- Kimball, Marcus MP 139
- Kipling, Rudyard, 'Fox Hunting' 177
- Knight Bruce, Rory, *Red Letter Days* 156, 180–82, 184, 190
- Labour Party and fox hunting
 backbench antagonism 11, 131, 145, 148, 150
 the ban as 'accidental policy outcome' 142, 148
 the early years 128–31
 Home Policy Committee 138
 National Executive Committee 138, 139
 New Labour 1, 142–51
 1983 party manifesto 140
 in the 1940s and 50s 132–7
 from the 1960s to 1997 137–42
 pro-hunting Labour MPs 127–8
 reluctance to commit to a ban 11, 128
- Landscape and fox hunting 165–74, 177–8, 182–3
- Lawrence, John, *Philosophical and Practical Treatise on Horses* 57–8
- League Against Cruel Sports (LACS) 21, 73, 79, 80, 83, 138, 141
- Leech, John 88, 154, 164
- Legislative attempts to protect animals 60–62, 83, 130, 131, 132–3, 137–47
- Lofting, Hugh 74–5, 104
Doctor Dolittle's Circus 75–6
- McFall, John MP 141
- Macfarlane, Robert 166, 173n120, 184, 185n169
- McNamara, Kevin MP 140–41, 142

- Martin, Richard ('Humanity') MP 59–60, 62, 71, 129
- Masefield, John 105, 117, 118, 158, 177–8
The Box of Delights 185
The Midnight Folk 98n42
Reynard the Fox 11, 96–9, 117, 123, 157–8, 159, 161, 162, 165, 166, 181
- Memoirs of Dick, a Little Poney* 66, 82–3
- Michael, Alun MP 145–7, 150
- Middle-class fox hunters 16–17, 33–6
- Mitford, Nancy 103
- Monbiot, George 36, 149–50, 151
- Mytton, Jack MFH 22, 23–4, 100–101
- Neeson, Jeanette 172, 173, 174
- Nimrod 14, 23, 27, 46, 180
- Opposition to fox hunting
 attacked in the *Monthly Review* (1781) 1, 51
 as a class issue 1, 56, 70–73, 78, 80–81, 82–4, 135, 149–51
 on the grounds of cruelty to animals 51, 54, 55–7, 67–71, 73–4, 78
 on moral grounds 9, 34, 67–9
 nineteenth-century evolution of 67–71
 as old as the sport itself 1, 9, 189
 twentieth-century evolution of 73–4, 77–82, 130–51
- Osbaldeston, George MFH 22, 23, 24, 160
- Parliament Act 1, 137, 145, 146, 147
- Peyton, K.M.
Flambards trilogy 85, 116–24
A Pattern of Roses 124
- Pony books 104–16
 Cannan, Joanna 107
 as Cinderella stories 116
 Cumming, Primrose, *Silver Snaffles* 106, 177
 Ferguson, Ruby, *Jill* books 107, 116
 Oliver, M.M. and Eva Ducat, *The Ponies of Bunts* 106–7, 175, 177
- Peyton, K.M.
Fly-by-Night 116
The Team 116
- Pullein-Thompson, Christine 167
- I Carried the Horn* 108, 109
A Day to Go Hunting 108, 109–10, 111
Goodbye to Hounds 108
We Hunted Hounds 108, 109, 110
- Pullein-Thompson, Diana, *The Hermit's Horse* 111–12
- Wace, Muriel, *Moorland Mousie* 105–6, 177
- Pony clubs 42, 43, 77n109
- Primatt, Humphrey, *Dissertation on the Duty of Mercy* 54–5
- Pullein-Thompson, Josephine, Diana and Christine, *Fair Girls and Grey Horses* 108
- Ridley, Jane, *Fox Hunting* 32, 38, 115n123
- Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals
 1976 reversal of position on fox hunting 10, 79, 114
 origins of 54, 62–4
 refusal to condemn fox hunting as cruel 73, 79
- Royalty and fox hunting 20–22, 48–9, 84, 181
 Prince Charles 21, 45, 48–9, 84
 Princess Anne 20–21, 84
 Princess Elizabeth 20, 181
- Saki, 'Esme' 104
- Salt, Henry and the Humanitarian League 69–73, 83, 128, 130, 190
- Sassoon, Siegfried, *Memoirs of a Fox Hunting Man* 33, 35n128, 53, 125, 157, 158–9, 161, 162, 167, 180, 181
- Sewell, Anna, *Black Beauty* 66–7, 105
- Scott Henderson Report 136–7
- Scruton, Roger 45, 150n120, 156, 171, 173–4, 178–80, 184, 190
- Smith, Thomas Assheton MFH 22, 23
- Somerville, William, *The Chace* 51, 64–5, 69, 77, 97, 103
- Sparks, Joseph MP 131, 135
- Sportsmen
 animal-loving 56, 59, 60, 189
 cruel 56, 72, 78

- Steel, Anthony, *Jorrock's England* 157, 161, 163, 164, 190
- Straw, Jack MP 144–5
- Sturt, George 172–3, 174, 184
- Subscription packs 24–6
- Surtees, R.S. 11, 29, 85, 86–91, 97, 105, 110, 114, 118, 122, 125, 154, 156, 157, 160, 162, 163–4, 177, 180
Analysis of the Hunting Field 13, 29, 86
Jorrock's Jaunts and Jollities 86, 90, 192
Mr Facey Romford's Hounds 86, 87, 89, 90, 160
Mr Sponge's Sporting Tour 86, 87, 88–9, 90, 114
- Thomas, Richard H., *Politics of Hunting* 2n3, 14n2, 21, 44, 80–81, 83, 137, 148, 149, 190, 191
- Toynbee, Polly 147, 189
- Trevelyan, G.M. 167–70, 172, 174–5, 184, 185
- Trevor-Roper, Hugh 35, 170
- Trollope, Anthony 11, 17, 25, 28, 35, 38, 39, 47, 52–3, 69, 70, 85, 97, 118, 125, 137, 154–5, 159, 188
The American Senator 93–4
The Eustace Diamonds 39, 92
Marian Fay 93, 94–5
- Universal kinship 69–70
- Wace, Muriel, *The Young Rider* 42–3, 77, 105, 175, 176–7
- Watson, Frederick, *Robert Smith Surtees* 88, 90, 98, 118, 157, 161, 164, 190
- Waugh, Evelyn
Brideshead Revisited 103
A Handful of Dust 103–4
- White, Gilbert 53
- Whyte-Melville, George 11, 97, 105, 120
Digby Grand 91–2
‘The Good Grey Mare’ 91
Market Harborough 48n2, 91
Riding Recollections 66, 160–61
- Williams, Tom MP 130, 132, 133–4, 147, 148
- Willoughby de Broke, Lord 26, 95–6
- Windham, William MP 61–2, 68, 159–60, 189
- Women
lady masters 41, 42, 153n4
look fat on horseback 40, 115
in the nineteenth-century field 36–41
riding astride 39, 41
riding side saddle 37, 39–40, 123n153
twentieth-century feminization of riding 42
in the twentieth-century field 42, 97
- Woodforde, James 53
- Woods, Michael 142, 143, 148–9
- Woolf, Virginia 99–103
‘Jack Mytton’ 23–4, 85, 100–101
Jacob's Room 102
‘The Shooting Party’ 102n55
sporting metaphors in the diaries 101
The Voyage Out 101, 102
The Waves 100, 101, 102–3
- Young, Thomas
Essay on Humanity to Animals 55